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CCA CONSULTATION,
WITH
CHURCH LEADERS
FROM
CHINA

Hong Kong
March 23-26, 1981

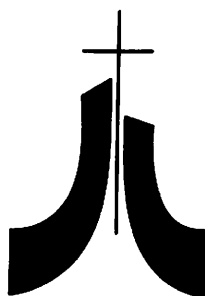
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Mr. Shen De-rong, Miss Tsao Seng-chieh, Rev. Peter Tsai, Rt. Rev. K.H. Ting, Bishop Peter Kwong (Hong Kong), Rev. Matthew Tong, Mr. Han Wen-chao.



Rev. Hung Chan-pui, Rev. Matthew Tong, Mr. Lo Kuan-chung, Miss Ko Siu Wah (Hong Kong), Rev. Toshio Uchiroku (Japan).

Introduction

Brought together in this booklet are the major papers presented at the historic consultation with Chinese Christian leaders held in Hong Kong, March 1981.

One of the papers is transcribed from tape. All of them appear in the form in which they were presented. We are grateful to Janice and Philip Wickeri who translated two of the papers from Chinese into English.

We have already reported on the consultation in the April issue of *CCA News*. That report is reproduced here, and will serve as a general introduction to the subject and the nature of the consultation.

Perhaps the presentations made by our Chinese friends call for a more detailed understanding of the background of their thinking. We include here, as an appendix, Bishop K H Ting's *A Call for Clarity*, which we take from *Ching Feng* (Vol XXIV, No 1, 1981), and provides precisely that kind of background.

The visit of the Chinese church leaders to Hong Kong received a good deal of publicity in the press. We include a few of the write-ups that appeared in the secular press.

We commend this booklet to our churches and councils, and we hope it will enable us to gain a better appreciation of the happily changing situation of the church in China.

YAP KIM HAO
General Secretary

Consultation with Chinese Christians

The Christian Conference of Asia sponsored a historic consultation in Hong Kong from 23 to 26 March. Its general theme was Christian Witness.

How does such a consultation become historic?

Because of the composition of its participants. After a period of about 32 years, a group of Chinese Christian leaders representing the Protestant Christian community in the People's Republic of China had travelled out of China to discuss issues of Christian faith and life with leaders of churches and national councils from Australia, Bangladesh, Burma, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The World Council of Churches was represented by Mr Ninan Koshy and the Asia YMCA's by Mr Lee Soo Min.

There were eight Chinese Christian leaders present at the meeting—Mr Han Wenzao, Rev Hung Chan-pui, Mr Lo Kuan-chung, Mr Shen De-rong, Rt Rev K H Ting, Rev Matthew Tong, Rev Peter Tsai, and Miss Tsao Seng-chieh. They represented the newly formed China Christian Council.

They presented three papers at the consultation—on *Christianity in China, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow; Witness-bearing in New China*; and *Christian Witness-bearing in Chinese Political Life*.

Dr Lee Lai To of the Department of Political Science of the National University of Singapore gave a general survey of "Big Power Relations in Asia". Dr Ng Lee Ming from Chung Chi College, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, presented a paper on "The Historical and Theological Perceptions of the Chinese Church".

General discussion followed each presentation. Important interventions were made by Bishop K H Ting and other participants. The issues discussed included theological education, relationships of the Chinese church, and evangelisation in other parts of Asia. Mutual

sharing of ideas and experiences continued after the formal sessions were over.

The Consulation looked into the political realities of the Asian region and recognised the influence of the big powers—the United States and USSR; the economic power of Japan; and the emerging power of China. It is in the context of these big power relationships that delegates tried to understand the political dynamics in the region.

Historical Perspective on China

The Chinese Church delegates described the problems and challenges of the Church in China in recent times. One of the primary tasks of the church since 1949 has been to remove the image which was projected in the past, of Christianity as a foreign religion, and of the church as a foreign institution. The primary concern was to discern the church's role in the political situation in China and to identify with the struggles of the people. The period of the Cultural Revolution was a time of severe opposition to the life of the organised churches and to Christian people.

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During the past two years, however, about one hundred churches have been organised in various cities in China, and the Nanking Union Seminary has resumed theological education with the admission of forty-eight students to its first class in March 1981. The Bible has been reprinted and the Christian periodical *Tien Feng* has resumed publication.

In order to understand the positions which the present church leadership in China adopts, we must take into consideration the peculiar history of the Christian movement in China. There are certain issues like the Three-Self Patriotic Movement which cannot be understood apart from an understanding of the historical experience of the Chinese Church.

The 'foreign' image of the church, for example. Our Asian churches know this only too well; we have all been accused of following an alien religion. However, the problem was compounded in China when the government attacked the various forms of western political, economic and cultural dominance and established the People's Republic of China. This placed the Christian Church in China in a very difficult situation. Therefore, one of the primary considerations for the Christian leaders in China was to cut off as far as possible all foreign ties, especially with the West. At the same time

it made conscious attempts to relate to the emerging China. The institution to further this was the Three-Self Patriotic Movement which affirmed the principles of self-support, self-governmental and self-propagation.

Question of Relationships

During the confused days of the Cultural Revolution, even this movement could hardly function. It is difficult, in the circumstances, for them to receive funds and personnel from foreign sources. It could jeopardise their attempts to project a new image; it might even put the clock back. One must also be aware of the fact that funds and personnel from outside China could weaken their determination to exercise responsible stewardship not only in managing their own church life but also in developing their own theological understanding of the life and mission of the Church in China.

Bishop K H Ting described this clearly when he said that the Chinese church must raise a "protective tariff" at the present time in order to develop the Church in China.

One must therefore respect the "protective tariff" and our good intentions should not lead us to impede the indigenous development of Chinese church life. There is also the question of the internal relationships of a comparatively small Christian Church within China, with the state's official policy of atheism on the one hand and of religious freedom on the other. It is important that external relationships should not mar the image of the Christian Church as it seeks to relate to the Chinese people. There may well be a limited scope for foreign relationships, especially relationships with western churches, and those outside China must respect the limitations which are a consequence of the priorities they have deliberately set for themselves. The fact that they have been in consultation with Asian Christian leaders and plan to participate in international consultations later this year proves their desire to relate to the Christian community outside China. Their present stance should not be viewed as a rejection of the international Christian community. People must have the patience and the humility to recognise that they know better than we do what their priorities should be.

Nor are the motives of those who want to go in or establish relationships entirely altruistic or Christian. For example, the sending of Bibles into China has apparently become a political issue. Many Christian individuals and organizations are concerned over the fact

that there is 'scarcity' of Bibles in the country. They have launched campaigns to raise money to 'smuggle' Bibles into China. There were cases where anti-government political tracts were smuggled into the country, hidden in Bibles. The whole operation is an embarrassment to the Chinese church in so far as it challenges the integrity of the Chinese government and the priorities of Chinese Christians.

Theological Ferment

It was reported that there is considerable theological ferment in the Chinese church. Christian intellectuals are on the one hand related to the common people and on the other dedicated to the work of the church. They try to find common ground and seek a common language with the people who are struggling to work for the future of China. There is thus an ongoing search for truth and goodness.

But the issues which concern the Chinese theologians are not issues like *liberation, the poor and women*. Bishop Ting sounded the warning at one stage that, through such pre-occupations, we tend "to relativise the absolute and absolutise the relative". Theology will never achieve integrity if it loses sight of our relation with God. No liberation guarantees the realisation of that relationship. Political liberation will not liberate us from our restlessness and constant need of God. That will happen only through life in Christ, for Jesus Christ makes not better people but new people.

Conclusion

The consultation fulfilled its purpose of establishing personal relationships with the Chinese church leaders and other Asian leaders. Asian church representatives present at the consultation felt that the consultation was one of the most important events in the life of the Asian churches. One of them, Dr Won Yong Kang, a former CCA President, commented that the consultation was the best CCA programme in which he had participated during his 15 years' association with the CCA!

A Thanksgiving Service was held in which the Rev Matthew Tong of the Dong San Church in Guangzhou was the preacher and Bishop K H Ting brought greetings on behalf of the Chinese Christian Council, welcomed the delegation. The Chinese Church delegation met with various Christian organisations and church leaders in order to achieve better mutual understanding of the situation of the Church in China, as well as in Hong Kong.

It was a pity that representatives from Taiwan and Laos could not join us. We remembered them and all our churches and peoples in Asia at a period of intercession.

The Consultation concluded with a communion service conducted by Bishop Peter Kwong of the Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau of the Anglican Church, when the participants broke bread together and dedicated themselves to a common witness to Jesus Christ.



Dr. Lee Lai To (Singapore), Bishop Peter Kwong (Hong Kong), Dr. Ng Lee Ming (Hong Kong).



Dr. Masao Takenaka (Japan), Mr. Shen De-rong (China), Dr. Soritua Nababan (Indonesia), Rt. Rev K.H. Ting (China).

Big-power Relations in Asia— A General Survey

Lee Lai To

Introduction

One of the stark realities of Asian politics is that it is always dominated by the major powers. Two of these major powers, China and Japan, are located physically in Asia. As for the USA it has always argued that it is an Asian-Pacific power. Lastly, the Soviet Union, by virtue of its Asiatic Russia, has also claimed to be an Asian power. Perhaps what is more important, all these powers have the need, desire and capabilities to exert their influence in Asia. This is quite obvious as we survey the relations among the big powers in Asia since World War II.

Bipolarity in Asia

More than any other power, the United States stood as the most powerful nation in the Pacific when the Japanese surrendered in 1945. By virtue of its military might and its active participation in the defeat of the Japanese, Washington moved to occupy Japan. The Soviet Union, though it entered the war in the final days, was able to direct its armies to advance into Manchuria and a chain of islands north of Japan. This forceful and militaristic entrance of Moscow and Washington marked the beginning of a new area in Asian politics.

For the United States, its occupation of Japan paved the way for a long period of cooperation between the two countries. While the initial objective of the occupation was to reform a militaristic and authoritarian enemy nation, it was subsequently modified and Japan came to be regarded as an important ally of the United States. A contributing factor in this relationship was USA's problems with its wartime ally, the Soviet Union. Both countries differed widely over post-war

solutions to problems. Furthermore, the balance of power in East Asia shifted drastically as the Chinese Communist Party began to win victory after victory in the civil war with the US-supported Nationalist government. The subsequent defeat of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 led Washington to look to Japan, rather than to China, as the central base for the maintenance of its power in Asia. It also led the US to believe that economic recovery and growth were necessary for the strengthening of Japan.

The Soviet Union took advantage of its presence in China to expand its influence in Asia. However, one should never over-estimate its influence on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the amount of help it gave to Mao. To be sure, the CCP benefitted from Japanese weapons and the considerable territory turned over to it by the Soviet Union while occupying Manchuria. But the main asset of the CCP lay in its superior leadership, morale and organization. The political and economic chaos in areas controlled by the KMT also contributed to the swift success of the CCP.

In the early years of the PRC, the most important step in foreign policy taken by the new government was the formation of an alliance with the Soviet Union. Political realism and ideological imperatives seemed to have governed Mao's perception of China's foreign policy. Thus by 1949, if not earlier, the alignment of the major powers in Asia was clear. By then, the cold war between the United States and Soviet Union was well under way in Asia. These two superpowers and their respective allies, notably Japan in the case of the United States and the PRC in the case of the Soviet Union, found themselves at loggerheads. In a matter of a few years after the Second World War, bipolarity was established in the international politics of Asia, with the United States and the Soviet Union challenging each other's dominance. This was vividly demonstrated and reconfirmed by the Korean War which stiffened the attitudes of both camps.

The Sino-Soviet Rift

This two-camp analysis is no longer helpful because of the distrust that developed between China and Russia. The Sino-Soviet conflict was undoubtedly the most important cause of the change from a bipolar to a multipolar world. As there were many forces and factors involved in the conflict, the following analysis is offered as a summary and an introduction to the conflict.

Viewed from a historical point of view, one may suggest that the Treaty of Nerchinsk signed in 1869 marked the beginning of a series of territorial disputes between Moscow and Peking. One may also suggest that the near decimation of the CCP in 1927 by following Stalin's policy and the minimal help given to Mao in Kiangsi and Yenan could also sow the seeds of discord between the PRC and the USSR. In addition, the fact that Moscow had gone so far as to sign a non-aggression pact with the KMT during the Second World War would have further disillusioned the CCP. However, domestic imperatives and ideology seemed to have prevailed over the Chinese as they pursued a policy of friendship with USSR after the PRC was formed.

But tensions quickly resurfaced. For one thing, from the very beginning, the aid given by the Soviet Union was not all that generous. In fact the Chinese gradually found out that the Russians were not willing to assist them. More important, Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech in 1956 produced not only uprisings in Poland and Hungary but shocked the Chinese. Chinese disappointment with the Russians was further reinforced by the fact that Moscow failed to help Peking in the 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis.

Mao's determination to go his own way was well exemplified by the launching of the Great Leap Forward which supposedly could challenge the supremacy of the Soviet model. This incipient tension between the two countries was quite noticeable when Mao crushed Chinese leaders who were influenced by Russia, noticeably Marshall Peng Teh-huai who had challenged Mao's Great Leap Forward.

Apparently, the PRC and the USSR also differed in their approach towards the "imperialists". While Mao thought that "the east wind prevails over the west wind", Khrushchev was much more cautious and stepped up his movement towards detente with the USA. Connected with this, Moscow, unlike Peking, was reluctant to support wars of national liberation as these might spark off conflicts between Moscow and Washington. As generally agreed by many academics, by 1960, the Sino-Soviet conflict had already reached a point of no return when Moscow withdrew all its technicians from China.

Meanwhile, one significant result of the Sino-Soviet conflict was a general increase of Soviet involvement in Asia so as to limit the growth of Chinese influence in the region. The competition had gone beyond the vying for the support of various communist parties; there was the establishment of formal alliances with Asian countries. This was especially true after the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine, as

Peking suspected that the Russians would increase their influence in areas formerly dominated by the Americans.

The Sino-American Detente

As the threat from the Soviet Union began to increase, Peking looked for alternatives to safeguard its national security. This was especially true after the period of isolation in foreign affairs during the Cultural Revolution from 1966-69. Thus a primary objective of China since the late 60's was to develop new relationships with other major powers in Asia so as to counterbalance the Soviet Union. While Peking was considering new policies towards other major powers, the USA also began to make a major readjustment of its policies. Under tremendous domestic pressures, the USA began to move cautiously out of Vietnam. When the Nixon Doctrine was announced, there was no doubt that the USA would reduce its presence in Asia and that it was ready to be more flexible in dealing with other powers, including China, to compensate for the planned change in American military position in Asia. This no doubt reinforced Peking's desire to change its policy towards Washington.

As we know, there was subsequently the famous ping-pong diplomacy. Nixon went to Peking in 1972 and the Shanghai communique was signed. The communique had since become the cornerstone of Sino-American relations. While this important document symbolized the peaceful intention of both countries, it did not really solve the Taiwan issue. In it the US only declared that it did not challenge the fact that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintained that there was "but one China and that Taiwan is part of China".

The impact of the Nixon visit was world-wide. However, as far as Asia was concerned, this caught many countries off balance. Notably in Japan, the pressure to recognize Peking even at the cost of cutting diplomatic ties with Taiwan was greatly increased by the "Nixon shock" produced by USA's dramatic switch of China policy without prior consultation with Tokyo. So too were the pressure to re-examine Tokyo's broad relationship with the US and Japan's basic role in the world. With further shocks from Nixon's economic policy and the American desire to upgrade Japan's role in Asia, Tokyo began to search for an independent role in world affairs. As far as Japan's relations with the PRC were concerned, Tokyo moved faster than Washington and established diplomatic relations with Peking in 1972.

The Nixon visit forced the two Koreas to talk to each other for fear that the big powers might sell out their interests. As for Southeast Asia, the Sino-American detente greatly facilitated the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Smaller Southeast Asian countries, notably the Asean states, began to take steps to accommodate Peking and increase contacts with the PRC. This subsequently led to the establishment of diplomatic ties with PRC by three of the Asean States, namely, Malaysia in 1974, Thailand and the Philippines in 1975.

Multipolarity in Asia

The spirit of detente in the early 70's was no doubt the major factor that produced a four-power configuration in Asian politics. Events later on in the 70's also reinforced this pattern of multipolarity in Asia.

As always, the primary objective of Moscow is to challenge Chinese influence in Asia. Significantly, it has already made inroads into Chinese influence in Indochina. Moreover, the Russian Pacific fleet is also very active in Asian waters.

For China, its conflict with Russia continues unabated even after the death of Mao. Its dialogue with the US also seems to remain as the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy. As a result, an agreement to set up liaison offices in Peking and Washington was reached in 1973. More important, Peking and Washington established diplomatic ties with each other in January 1979.

Apparently, Peking is also able to persuade the Japanese to work closely with it, at least economically. The fact that Moscow is still unwilling to return territories claimed by the Japanese would surely strain Soviet-Japanese relations and help the Chinese in emphasizing the Soviet threat to Japan and the rest of the world.

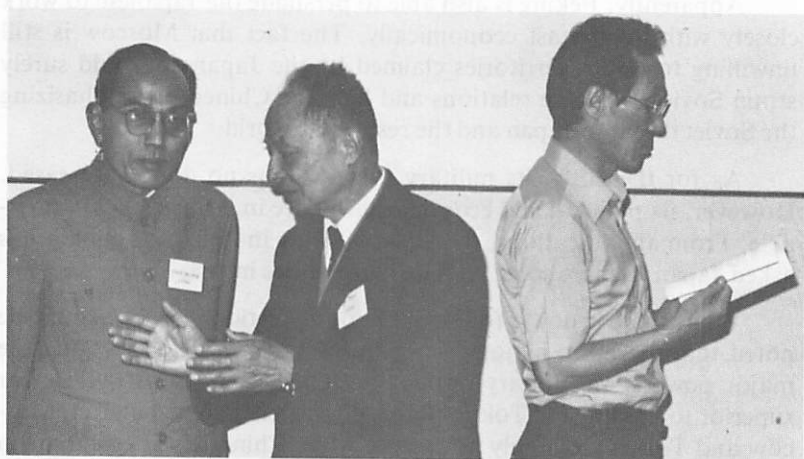
As for the USA, its military presence has no doubt decreased. However, its political and economic influence in Asia is still considerable. From all indications, the USA will stay in Asia, although it has asked Japan to share some of its responsibilities in Asia.

While there is now a four-power configuration in Asia, it must be noted that there are major discrepancies and differences among the major powers. In military terms, Washington and Moscow are far superior to Peking and Tokyo. In economic terms, Washington, Moscow and Tokyo are highly advanced, while China is still essentially a developing nation. For the latter, it is now promoting what is known

as the four modernizations at full speed. The final goal of this program is to catch up with the advanced powers by the end of the century. Apparently, the targets set were too ambitious. As a result, there have been various readjustments and modifications of the targets recently. Since the four modernizations depend basically on science and technology, China has to learn from the more advanced countries. At present, China is trying to learn from the West and, if this policy continues, it will further cement the co-operation between China, Japan and the USA.

Conclusion

With this pattern of four-power relations in Asia, it would seem that each power will find it necessary to respond to nearly all the actions of the other powers. Virtually everything that each does will have important implications for and repercussions on the others. As a result, all four will have more restraints in disturbing the "equilibrium" in the region. All four can also be expected to show greater flexibility in their foreign policies. While military factors will continue to be important in the relationships among the powers in the region, the relative importance of diplomatic, political and economic factors will grow. Such balance of power should be preferable to the tense bipolar division of Asia in the past. Finally, it seems that there will not be any drastic changes in the political alignments that could upset and destabilize the present pattern of relationships among the major powers in the foreseeable future.



Mr. Shen De-rong (China), Rev. Peter Tsai (China) Mr. Moon Kyu Kang (Korea).

The Church in China— Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

Peter Tsai

Your participation in this consultation shows that the Christian leaders of Asia are deeply interested in China and the Chinese churches. We are eager to listen to your views and opinions. I am sure these will give us insights or sidelights to improve our ministry for the better growth of our church. We are also willing to share sincerely with the conference conditions in our church and our own ministerial experiences and to join in common discussion. Comparing with the churches in some of our neighbouring countries, the church body in China is only a small one, but we are grateful to God for He loves and looks after our church just the same. He has given our church in China an abundant life. She is now growing both in size and in spirituality.

Why does the Church in China Need Three-Self?

The Church is the body of Christ, and the Christian believers in all nations are the members of that body. We believe that the church belongs to Christ, and only to Christ; the relations among churches are relations of members of the same body.

As Chinese history tells us, the entrance of Protestants into China since 1807 was interlocked historically with the invasion of western powers. Missionaries in early days served foreign invaders in many ways, some even helped in drafting the unequal treaties. Mission schools for a long time were the supporters of colonialism, forbidding Chinese students to take part in patriotic activities and stripping them of their right to love their motherland. Thus, in the eyes of the Chinese people, Christianity was a "foreign religion"—a part of alien colonial forces. As we look back to the Boxer Movement of 1900, the anti-Christian movement of 1922 among Chinese students in Peking and the Anti-Christian movement in 1927, we find that all these were basi-

cally directed against foreign aggression and not against Christian ideology. People were against the use of Christianity by foreign powers for invading China. This was all that the name "Foreign Religion" signified. The church of China, so long as it was labelled with such a dishonorable term, couldn't expect any rapid growth. Before liberation, the Protestant population at its strongest was only 700,000—less than two in one thousand Chinese people. The door of evangelism could never be opened wide.

For nearly two hundred years, the missionary groups sent by so-called "mother churches" of different nations had put in enormous amount of effort and money trying to build the so-called "younger churches". The numerous denominations and sects brought in by the mission societies had transplanted among us a variety of denominations and sectarian groups which were greatly detrimental to the communion and unity of church members and the growth of the true church. The result was that Chinese churches for a long time were called "the foreign mission churches", and continued the objects of benevolence of foreign churches. There was no brotherly relationship in the church's international contacts.

Movements for church independence were organized on a wide scale and quite a few small independent churches and societies were founded on the principle of self-government, self-support and self-propagation. But the foreign mission forces had no desire to give up their control. Consequently, the church in China as a whole didn't achieve any real independence although, as bitter historical experiences taught us, such independence was indispensable for the wide dissemination of the Gospel in the land of China.

The Experience of Thirty Years

After the liberation of China in 1949, the church of China has entered a new historical age. She was now situated in a new social environment. In this new China, the colonial features of the past had disappeared. There was a new mood and a new spirit, and human relations had changed greatly as a result of the wiping out of exploitation and oppression. The church now faced a new challenge to re-think its nature and mission.

Would the church in China identify itself with this new China? Should the Chinese Christians support the new developments?

Many Christian leaders were deeply convinced that the function of the Church at any time and in any place should be both priestly and

prophetic. Like Amos, Jeremiah and other prophets, the church ought to have a message relevant to the times, calling the people to witness to God's justice, charity, peace and truth in national and church life. These Christian leaders organised half of the Christian population in China to endorse a manifesto for a three-self patriotic movement, supporting all the good and just deeds of New China and standing with the masses to wipe out social evils. Many signed for the campaign, while a few hesitated as they questioned whether Christians could be patriots. They took a "wait-and-see" attitude towards New China. I myself was once an outsider watching how New China would shape. Then I saw many of the social evils being wiped out in a brief time, how exploitation was done away with, and social justice received increasing emphasis. I was reassured after seeing the miraculous accomplishments through so many great social reforms which had long been sought by the church. Were they not the will of God and the work of His own hands? I then joined the movement and learned to love my motherland as many other God's children did. I love the New China not only because I am a Chinese citizen, but even more so because I am a Christian.

The thirty years' experience has proved to Chinese Christians that their affection for the motherland and their affection for the church are not mutually exclusive but harmonious. The patriotic stance of Christian believers in the last thirty years has gradually wiped out from the minds of the rank and file of our people the image of a "foreign" church. The church in China began to be recognized as the church of China. The door of evangelism is thus opened.

I would like to point out another thing which is also proved by our 30 years' experiences. That is, we Christians enjoy religious freedom in New China. The policy of freedom of belief is practised by the Communist Party so as to unite people for the purpose of building a better country. The united-front principle of "seeking common ground and reserving differences" holds true about religion as well, and seeks to respect people's religious faiths. We are convinced of the sincerity of the government in implementing this policy. The government, on the whole, has given assistance to us to solve those problems related to the legitimate rights of church bodies.

The ten years of turmoil during the Cultural Revolution caused incalculable loss to the country and to the church. Religious freedom was violated. Now the policy is being restored and implemented in many ways—through the return of church buildings, for example, and the payment of compensation for financial losses. The

three-self organizations at different levels are now helping with the work of rebuilding the church. Many local churches have been restored for worship services and other programs. Since the China Christian Council was born in the Third National Christian Conference in Nanking last October, a nation-wide program of rebuilding work has been going on. Now, the second edition of the Bible and a variety of Christian books are being published; a training program for local ministers and lay-leaders is being planned; and the theological seminary in Nanking has re-opened.

Importing of Bibles

The question has been raised as to whether Bibles should be imported into China. Our position on this matter can be simply stated in three points:

1. Bibles are still in short supply but, as a matter of principle, we ought to meet the need ourselves. We do not want to see China return to the status of a mission field of overseas churches. It may take longer before the supply of Bibles becomes satisfactory, but we think it is worthwhile to wait because the principle of three-self is all-important for the true evangelization of China.
2. We are not opposed to people sending in or bringing in small numbers of Bibles for friends and relatives as gifts.
3. We are opposed to any publicity or campaign abroad capitalizing on our shortage of Bibles as a means of anti-New-China and anti-three-self propaganda, or as a means for raising money. You may be interested to know that in 1980 we published 50,000 New Testaments and complete Bibles. We hope we can publish more in 1981.

The Church of China Tomorrow

Once the rebuilding work began, there appeared in the church many exciting things. The Christian population is now larger than before. The church has given up its sense of aloofness. It has growing spiritual wealth gathered in the hearts of believers. The worshippers' devotion to the Lord is unprecedentedly evident, and the sacrificial spirit of the clergy today is admirable. We are convinced that the success of our church-rebuilding programme lies in the affection and loyalty of clergymen and lay Christians.

And the even more precious thing is that many things which happen in Chinese churches today are nearer to what the Bible teaches. And at the same time they are more Chinese in their mode of expression. Thus it creates favourable condition for us to make the church more biblical, and easier to be accepted by the people in China.

Let me mention a few things which might throw some light for a better understanding of the church in China today and tomorrow.

1. The church in China has now entered an undenominational period. The sectarian consciousness has gradually faded away among church members. The work of three-self has paved the way for undenominational churches. The Three-self patriotic movement stresses mutual respect in matters of faith, and longs to see the churches give up all sectarian bias. Is it not St Paul who urges us to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? This unity which we have long prayed for has now begun to bloom in our churches in China.
2. Another new thing that has appeared in the church of China is the multiple form of worship life.

Numerous home worship gatherings came up during the time of the Cultural Revolution when all churches were shut down and Christians had to get together in homes to worship quietly. In recent years, quite a number of churches have been reopened with the help of Three-self organizations. Many worshippers have flocked in, enjoying happily the liturgy and sermons which they had missed for a decade. There are still many worshippers going on with their meetings in homes, either because they wait for church buildings to be made available or because they enjoy these small gatherings to which they are used. The Three-self organizations and China Christian Council treat them as members of the body of Christ and help them in all ways. My Drum Tower Church in Hangzhou and the local Three-self Committee are now helping the home meetings—with preaching, celebrating sacraments and even in the matter of repairing meeting rooms. At the same time, the lay leaders and worshippers of the home meetings are taking part in the activities of my church and the Three-self organization. This brotherly co-existence of regular churches and home gatherings in a way enriches the worship life of our church in China. It is an entirely false distinction certain Christians abroad are making

between home Christian meetings and Three-self, as if only those Christians worshipping in church buildings are for Three-self.

3. Another special feature of the present church in China is that God has mobilized a great number of lay-workers to serve the churches. It was natural in the years of turmoil during the Cultural Revolution, while the churches were closed and clergymen were being persecuted, that the load of preaching and teaching in home gatherings fell upon the shoulders of lay workers. Now, as a result, more lay-workers share in the ministry. Even the clergymen today, whether young or aged, work along with lay workers whole-heartedly. This new feature, which was commended by St Paul, will be a permanent Chinese mode of church life. The China Christian Council will give the lay leaders movement its full support.
4. Another trend is towards the de-institutionalisation of church enterprises. Putting aside the problem of the evaluation of church-related schools and hospitals and other enterprises of the past, we are now in a socialist society and the church in China today has stopped running these enterprises. Going through this de-institutionalising process, the church in China has returned to be a faith community. This change actually reflects the change of church structure. It enables the church to concentrate all her efforts on better ministerial work for bringing about a widening influence of the gospel.
5. Thirty years' experience has shown that the most effective way of evangelism is through personal contacts, especially through oral witness and life witness. Christian believers today are witnessing in various ways to the Lord in their professional posts and other areas of life, "taking thought for what is noble in the sight of all" (Rom 12). They are concerned about the welfare of people and the future of their motherland and the world. They win converts with the love of Christ.

Now the problem is: Can the Chinese church which possesses all these new features continue to grow in the land of China?

We believe in the eternity of the church as much as in the eternity of God. To doubt the future of the church is to doubt God Himself. This is our faith and the measure of our trust in

the power of God. But, as to visible churches, they are lampstands. If any one of them gives no light, no witness and no love, God would remove that lampstand from its place (Rev 2). The same is true of the visible churches in China. God would remove those which fail to witness. The history of Christian churches in China illustrates this.

As we all know, the Nestorian Church entered China by the silk road as early as in Tang Dynasty, and then again in Yuan Dynasty. But why were they both buried in oblivion and have not taken root in the soil of China?

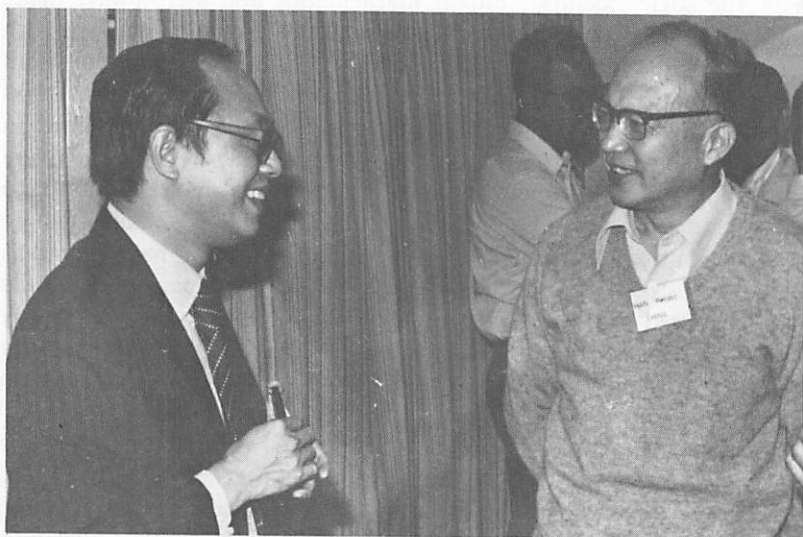
To take root in a place, a church must identify herself with the people of that place.

The Roman Catholic Church re-entered China in the later part of Ming Dynasty. The Jesuits Matteo Ricci, Adam Schall and Terdinand Verbiest brought to China western science which China needed. They studied Chinese classics, helped the Chinese government edit the solar calendar, taught mathematics and astronomy, made maps and translated books on sciences. They had no association with any political attempt to invade or occupy China. They won the warm support of Chinese emperors and officers. Some of the important Chinese officers became Christians who helped build cathedrals in Peking, Hangzhou and other cities. In those days, the Jesuits were different from the Franciscans and Dominicans in that they wanted to take a more lenient and permissive attitude to some of the old Chinese Confucian rites such as ancestor worship. That would have helped to make Christianity indigenous, but the Vatican was against the Jesuits and favoured of the Franciscans and Dominicans. Today, as we look back, we realize that all those three orders worked almost entirely among the higher class people and were detached from the common people of China. They had no sympathy whatever with the peasants' movements of those days. That was no way for Christianity to take root in China. You have probably heard that the Tombs of Ricci and his Jesuit colleagues have recently been repaired by the Chinese government. They are remembered by the Chinese people on account of their contribution to science in China.

As for the Protestant church in China, it was labelled "foreign religion" for a long time. As it had not identified itself with the people in China, it could not win them to Christ. This may be proved by the following figures. The early Jesuits in Ming Dynasty had enlisted 110,000 converts to the church in 50 years while the Protestant Church

had only enlisted 55,000 in 86 years up to 1893. To-day, believers in China have greatly increased in number. The increase is not, as some people say, the result of people's so-called disillusionment with the political situation. There might be a few such, but they are exceptions. I think the real and main reason for the increase today is that because of the Three-self Movement the Chinese church has changed the attitude of the people toward it, and there exists a new relationship between Christianity and the common people. Chinese Christians are today giving heart-winning witness to the gospel, without any foreign influence.

This then is the future of the church of China. As we keep to the three-self road, calling Christians to the service of the country and of our people and giving prophetic message for the age, the future of the church in China is assured. God will bless this lampstand, and it will shine for ever in the great land of China, and His name will be glorified as the people see the good works of the church.



Dr. Ng Lee Ming (Hong Kong), Mr. Han Wen-chao (China).

Historical and Theological Perceptions of the Chinese Church

Ng Lee Ming

Introduction

When I first received the request to give this talk, I was more than a little embarrassed. For I was not really brought up in the church in China, and my training has largely been Western. Although I have written on the history of Christianity in China, my understanding of the church in China is basically through books, and through the several Chinese Christian personalities whom I have studied, but did not know personally. Thus, not having involved myself in the existential struggle of the Chinese church, especially since 1949, I find it rather difficult, if not impossible, to fully appreciate the anxiety, the agony, the joy, and the aspirations that it must have experienced. While all this may allow me to claim a certain degree of objectivity, the risk is great that what I am going to say may in fact appear naive, or even irrelevant, to those who are in the thick of it all. But since I am given the assignment, I shall try to do my best.

I shall not attempt to interpret the historical and theological significance of the church in China as such, although I am sure this question is very much on our mind. On this, I am far more eager to listen to and to learn from our friends from China. What I hope to do is to give a brief account of what the church in China did in the years between 1920 and 1950. I am not doing this simply as an academic exercise. For almost all of what the church in China did during this time could be taken to represent one single quest—namely, the search for self-identity, the effort to build a truly Chinese church. If my reading is correct, this is still very much the concern of leaders of the Chinese church to-day. In fact, I think the same can be said of most churches in Asia. My hope is that the experience of the church in China may therefore shed some light on our continuing efforts now and in future.

Towards Institutional Independence

The task of building an indigenous church was many-faceted. We shall briefly look at three major aspects.

The first was institutional, the attempt to achieve the institutional independence of the church.

For over a century, Protestant Christianity in China had been dominated by Western missionaries. But by the turn of the century, there was a significant increase in the number of Chinese adherents to the Protestant faith. Between 1900 and 1920, the number of Protestant communicants in China almost quadrupled. As the number of Chinese church workers increased (the ordained Chinese workers outnumbered the ordained missionaries for the first time in 1920), friction with missionaries became almost inevitable, fuelled on either side by national sentiments and cultural pride or arrogance, as well as other forms of human frailty. A new arrangement, or working relationship, was called for. But there were also pressures coming from outside the church. In the heat of rising nationalism, one of the things that the church in China was charged with was that it was a foreign institution on Chinese soil, controlled by Westerners, and serving imperialistic purposes. It was therefore only natural that leaders of the church should try to seek the institutional independence of the church from Western domination, and the three-self principle became a major goal the church set for itself. Some small beginnings were made in this regard. The National Christian Council was formed in 1922, and a Chinese, Mr C Y Cheng, was elected president. The Church of Christ in China was established in 1927. All these were efforts to give the Chinese greater say in the affairs of the church and to free the church from missionary domination. But success in this regard was minimal. We need not go into the details here. The fact was that, as of 1949, the missionary elements continued to be a dominant factor in the life of the church in China.

There were, however, exceptions, and significant exceptions these were. From the 20's on, there emerged in China a number of sectarian groups, groups that had fully achieved the three-self ideal. One of the most notable of these was Wang Ming-tao's "Christian Tabernacle" in Beijing. That church was not only self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating; it was also self-built. And yet this church, and others like it, in spite of achieving the three-self goal and thus thoroughly becoming indigenized in the institutional sense, did not really provide a tenable basis for the church's existence in China. For the

Theology!

message it preached was totally out of touch with the cultural and social realities of China at that time. Its other-worldly message, with an almost exclusive concern with the salvation of the soul and a total negation of the world, though providing a sense of hope and perhaps even a psychological refuge for the faint-hearted and those in despair, made little sense to the majority of those whose concern was the reconstruction of a new China. As such it could hardly be called an indigenous church, nor could a truly Chinese church be built on such a theological basis. Materialism

Thus we see that the three-self principle, or the institutional independence of the church, though a worthwhile goal to strive for, in no way guarantees an authentic existence for the church. No doubt, it does have great symbolic meaning that our church is free from Western control or imperialistic domination. But it by no means signifies the realization of the self-hood of the church. Of course we cannot deny that the three-self principle is a favorable pre-condition for the effective preaching of the Gospel, but it is only a pre-condition, or a tool, for a far more important end. And accordingly, it should not be turned into an end in itself.

Transactions with Culture

The second aspect of the work towards an indigenous church had to do with Christianity's relationship with China's traditional culture. During the May Fourth Movement, as well as the Anti-Christian Movement, it was pointed out that Christianity was alien to China's heritage, and that Christians, Chinese Christians, were traitors who had betrayed their own culture. A concerted effort was made by some leaders of the church in China to show that the teachings of Christianity were in tune with China's cultural heritage, and to bring Christianity and the traditional Chinese culture into some form of harmonious relationship. Numerous articles were written on the subject. One may say that any Christian writer in China worthy of his salt would have a few articles on the subject. Even Y T Wu, who was not much of a classical scholar, was obliged to write on "Confucius and Christ".

Chinese theologians went about this task with great confidence at first in the 20's. But gradually some fundamental problems began to emerge in what they were doing.

For example, in the attempt to show the affinity between Christianity and China's cultural past, the tendency was to bring out

those elements that the two had in common. In the process, the distinctive nature of each was lost in the search for the largest common factor. In the end, Christianity lost what made it Christian, and Confucianism what made it Confucian. T C Chao, one of the leaders in this endeavour, was later inclined to speak out against such an approach. "People tried to synthesize Christianity and Confucianism, not knowing that Christianity was what China did not have, was contradictory to Chinese culture, and was to redeem the culture of China in that contradiction."

The above problem is a general one, one that can be found in most non-Christian cultures. There was however another drawback in this approach that was unique in the Chinese situation at the time. The work of cultural indigenization was to a large extent provoked by the New Thought Movement, which charged that Christianity, among other things, was alien to the Chinese ethos. To show that this was not the case, it was natural that advocates of Christianity should try to point out the similarities between Christianity and Chinese culture. And yet within the same Movement, traditional Chinese culture was itself a major target of attack and was held responsible for much of China's ills. Confucianism was called "an idol that has lost its powers, and a fossil of the past". In identifying Christianity with Chinese culture in general and Confucianism in particular within such a climate of opinion, the well-intentioned defenders of Christianity were only courting defeat. Although the similarities between Christianity and Confucianism that had been pointed out might not be the elements that were under attack, the fine distinctions were not always appreciated. It was Wu Lei Chuen, the first Chinese president of Yen-ching University, who first saw this. He wrote, "Chinese culture itself is now seeking a new direction of development. It is therefore futile for Christianity to identify itself with traditional Chinese culture".

Partly as a result of this line of thinking, the work of cultural indigenization came to an abrupt end late in the 20's, and the question of Christianity's relationship with China's traditional culture remained unsettled. But the end to this work was in fact also due to a change in the mood of the country and the church's response to it. With the pressure of foreign encroachment mounting each day, the Chinese people were by the 30's less concerned with the maintenance of their national identity in the cultural sense than with the maintenance of their country as a sovereign political entity. "National Salvation", or "National Reconstruction", was all that mattered. Thus the attention of Chinese theologians turned, from the 30's on,

solely to the question of Christianity's role in or contribution to the task of national reconstruction. And this brings us to the third aspect, what I would call the social aspect, in the building of an indigenous church.

Concern for Social Issues

Of course the question of national reconstruction did not emerge only in the late 20's or early 30's, nor did the Chinese theologians' concern with it start only then. But in the 20's, almost all of them, including Y T Wu, were opting for the "liberal" approach. What China needed most, it was generally accepted then, was spiritual, or psychological, reconstruction. It was to be the foundation stone of national, or social, reconstruction. Since Christianity, or a new religious spirit, could best bring that about, it could therefore be the basis for national reconstruction. This seemed plausible enough in the 20's, as much of the country was pinning its hope on "education" as the way to national salvation. But as China's situation became worse, this "liberal" approach was found by most to be too slow for the occasion. Theologians in China were therefore obliged to address themselves more directly to social issues *per se*, or on the alternative approaches to the problems and needs of China. This was true even with those who still maintained the liberal approach. Now we have articles on "Christianity and the National Crisis", "The Future of the Church in Social and Economic Thought and Action", "Reconciliation and Revolution", "Christianity and China's Reconstruction", "Christian Faith and National Resistance and Reconstruction", to name just a few. Essays such as these clearly showed the concern of the writers for their country. But at the same time, they were meant to appeal to those outside the church, to show that in the midst of the national crisis, Christianity was relevant. Social questions had replaced cultural ones as the entering point for the dialogue between Christianity and the largely non-Christian populace. With the whole country caught up in the task of reconstruction, leaders of the church fully realized that if Christianity was to become meaningful to the Chinese at all, it had to relate itself to their particular concerns. It may not be the ultimate concern, but it was a more immediate and existential one that could not be denied. The acceptance or rejection of Christianity was to be decided on the basis of the contribution which Christianity could make towards the reconstruction of China.

Against this background, theologians in China found that they had to take a rather different approach from their Western counter-

parts in dealing with the social question. In the West, when the Christian role in society is discussed, the basic question is what a Christian, or Christianity, should do in a particular situation. Rightly or wrongly, the acceptance of Christianity was taken for granted. Nor are questions raised regarding the validity of Christianity in relation to various social problems. Christianity, with all that it implies, is the "given" to the problem that is to be worked out. If what Christianity, or the church, comes up with should prove incapable of bringing about the desired result, the tendency is not to question the validity of Christianity itself. Other ideas then come to the rescue. Christianity, it may be asserted, is basically a religious faith which does not necessarily have a direct bearing on the workings of society. Alternatively, the human person, being sinful, will never be able to, and therefore should not be expected to, bring about an ideal social order. What all this amounts to is that in the West, the extent to which Christianity is related to society is of less importance. The first and most important thing is to be a Christian, so to speak, and that can be considered quite apart from social relations. Ethics becomes in effect an appendix to the theological issues of God and salvation.

But things were different in China. First and foremost was the fact that Christianity was not widely accepted. In considering the relationship of Christianity to society, the question asked was not "What I, as a Christian, should do in a particular situation?", but "Why should I become a Christian at all?" And this question was posed against all the political and social turmoil of the time and was to be answered only within that context. In other words, the contribution of Christianity to society was the context defined for Christianity to make its case in a predominantly non-Christian context. In this connection, Christianity was only one of several candidates to be considered. It had to compete with other faiths and ideologies. The emphasis on the spiritual dimension of Christianity would not likely win a sympathetic hearing, and the assertion of Christian realism was not in tune with the mood of a people struggling only to survive. Direct and concrete contributions of Christianity to Chinese society must be found, and this was the task which the church in China, wisely or not, took upon itself to pursue.

An Impasse—if not a Failure

As was to be expected, different people came to different conclusions. But this is no place to go into these. I would only want to point out there that, whatever options they took, they were secular

options. They were options borrowed from secular sources. So in the last analysis, what these people did in seeking for Christianity a positive role in society, was simply to Christianize a particular social philosophy. There was nothing specifically Christian in what they recommended for the church to do in terms of concrete action. Christianity may well be able to lead to a psychological reconstruction of the Chinese people, but education and the revival of certain aspects of China's cultural tradition were also considered to be capable of the same task. The Christian effort in rural reconstruction was clearly modelled after a secular attempt. The spirit of revolution may be inherent in Christianity, but it was definitely not an exclusively Christian commodity. There was simply no difference in what a liberal or a Christian liberal, a socialist or a Christian socialist, sought to do. In fact, none should be expected. But while leaders of the church in China should not be faulted for not doing the impossible, it was here that a basic problem arose. For in only being able to Christianize a secular approach, Chinese theologians were in fact admitting that no specific Christian contributions could be made in terms of concrete action. A Christian should do or could do only what others did. This was, of course, only an admission of fact, that we were no supermen. But in the particular situation in China at that time, it amounted to an admission of failure, the failure to satisfactorily answer the question, "Why should I become a Christian?" against the background it was posed. If all that a Christian could contribute to national reconstruction was none other than what a liberal, a socialist, or a communist could, why then become a Christian, instead of remaining a liberal, a socialist, or a communist?

Thus we can see that Chinese theologians before 1949 were not able to satisfactorily answer the one crucial question confronting the church at that time. It should however be pointed out that their failure to do so did not invalidate what they attempted to do. For if Christianity was to take root in China, if a truly Chinese church was to be realized, it had no alternative but to try to relate the Christian faith to the primary concern of the people at that particular time. In their effort to do so, it became obvious, as I have tried to point out, that the Western models were of no use. And I think some leaders of the church at that time also suffered from an unrealistic expectation of what Christianity, as a religion, could accomplish in that particular situation. This is a highly complicated question, and I do not think I want to go into it now. But I do want to point out that their experience in this regard does have something to say to us. I have said that in

seeking for Christianity a positive role in society, leaders of the church in China before 1949 only tried to Christianize certain social philosophies or ideologies. In so doing, they failed to satisfactorily answer that crucial question, "Why become a Christian?" This seems to suggest that in fully and totally identifying with any one social theory or ideology, the church, or Christianity, will not be able to establish the reason why it should do so. If Christians are doing only and exclusively that which a secular system demands of its adherents, the church will be hard put to affirm the authenticity of its existence.

All this was before 1949. Great and important changes have taken place in the country and the church since then. We can see that the three-self principle is now a reality in the church in China, and perhaps we can put behind us the somewhat negative historical factors that first brought the issue to the fore. Christianity's relationship with China's cultural past remains a question to be dealt with, although I personally do not see any great urgency for it. The one big question, I think, is how the church is to bear witness in the new situation. The change in the objective conditions of the country since 1949 has modified to a certain extent the nature of that question. The People's Government is a reality that we must accept. The question therefore is not and should not be that of choosing between Christianity and Communism. For those who have already accepted the Christian faith, whatever the reason, it is probably a question of defining one's role within the Communist context. But the church has a responsibility to those who are outside the fold. We are therefore still faced with the rather difficult question, "Why become a Christian?". And in trying to answer this question, one must take into consideration all the objective conditions of the country, as well as the anxiety, hope, and aspirations of those living there. I think for a church to be truly indigenous, be it in China or elsewhere, this question must be adequately answered. And this can only be done by those who share a common life with the people. As to how this should be done and is being done in China, I understand that will be dealt with in other lectures, and I stand ready to be informed and enlightened.

Christian Witness in New China

Tsao Seng-chieh

The gospel is the power of God (Rom 1 : 16)

You are my witness of these things (Luke 24 : 48)

I am most happy to be able to share with you some of our experiences of witness-bearing in the Chinese church.

The founding of New China enabled Chinese Christians and the Chinese people alike to cast off the exploitative and oppressive forces of foreign colonialism and reactionary political power, so that we could stand up and be the masters of our own country. It is not only that the material life of the people has been raised in our socialist society, but also that evils such as drug usage and prostitution have basically been eradicated. National reconstruction has become the lofty goal of the people's common struggle. Ours is a good society, better than the Chinese people have ever had before.

There were also a series of changes in the Chinese church as a result of the changes which occurred in the political environment. You may have heard of the departure of foreign missionaries and the severing of financial links with missionary societies. Education, medical work and other social services in our socialist society are run by the state and community and thus no longer the province of the church. The policy of religious freedom formulated by the people's government allows people to believe in religion, but does not grant special privileges to any faith. How could the gospel continue to be preached in such a situation? Did a Chinese church run by Chinese Christians have the power to bear witness to the Lord? These questions were in the minds of many people.

Thirty years have gone by and we are now able to offer a clear and definite answer. Chinese Christianity has not only been able to survive, but it has even grown into maturity. Although the church was not able to conduct public worship activity during the lawless period

of the “Gang of Four”, the true light of the gospel was never extinguished, and even burned more brightly. The fact that there are now many new Christians is enough to illustrate the vitality and attraction of the Chinese church.

The uncommon experience of Chinese Christians over this period has given us several new insights:

First of all, we have gone a step further in understanding the meaning of the passage “The gospel is the power of God”. The gospel is dependent neither on might nor on power, but on the Spirit of the Lord (Zach 4 : 6).

In the past, the Chinese church relied on foreign power and special privileges to preach the gospel. On Buddhist festivals, the church would organize Christians to go to Buddhist temples to preach, saying that their idols carved in wood or moulded in clay were false gods. The Buddhists were extremely annoyed by this, but they were forced to keep their resentment to themselves. Superficially it seemed as if Christians had the upper hand, but rather than manifesting the power of God, we were sowing the seeds of hatred in the hearts of the people. In church schools and hospitals, students and patients were forced to listen to the gospel. But because the gospel was mixed up with foreign ideology, the results were minimal despite the many opportunities for preaching. Our preaching even provoked feelings of disgust and eversion.

The loss of the church’s special privileges after the founding of New China was due to the bountiful grace of God. The church could no longer regard schools and hospitals as areas for missionary work. Also, we became conscious of respecting the faith and beliefs of others, thereby promoting unity among the people and avoiding conflicts between believers and non-believers, and among the different faiths. Was this not limiting the scope of the gospel? No, for the wonder of God exceeded all our hopes and expectations. With the change in style of our preaching, the work of the Holy Spirit was no longer limited or obstructed by numerous conditions, and even more people were willing to come and hear the gospel message. The path of the Chinese church has made our confidence in God grow day by day.

There are those who believe that people are only in need of God in situations of suffering and despair. They question the need of the gospel under more fortunate and stable social conditions. From our own experience, we Chinese Christians know that the gospel is an

eternal gospel, which must be preached "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev 14 : 6). There are no people on earth who are not in need of the gospel.

The gospel is the good news which calls people to be reconciled to God through the redemption of Jesus Christ. Man is created in God's image. No matter how beautiful a person's worldly life may be, he or she still longs to be in communion with God in his or her inner soul. Augustine said it well, "Lord, you have put a restlessness in our soul so that we can find no rest except in thee". Nothing can replace the word of eternal life which was given us by the Lord. During Jesus' life, he not only mourned with those who mourned, but rejoiced with those who were happy. He personally took part in the wedding feast at Cana, turning water into wine so that the wedding celebration would be even happier. Today, in our church, there are many older staff workers who are receiving retirement income and who are enjoying family life. Yet in their happiness, they are still in need of God, and regularly attend worship to offer praise and thanksgiving for all the good things they have received. Cherishing both their country and their church, the happiness of this world as well as eternal life, they feel that there need be no inner contradiction between the two.

Besides seeking eternal life, Christians have the duty to do good works in their daily lives. Amidst the day-to-day pressures of work, our faith in God gives us power from above. I know a young woman whose personality was weak from the time she was quite young, giving rise to very deep feelings of inferiority. When she began her work as a teacher, she faced an extremely difficult situation. Even though she would prepare conscientiously for her class, she became tongue-tied when she stood on the rostrum to speak. She grew very depressed over this. Later, she became a Christian, and learned to pray to ask God to give her strength. She came to believe that God was with her, and almost naturally grew in self-confidence. She felt that the fruit of faith was truly authenticated in her life and work.

Of course, no matter how beautiful our life on earth may be, we cannot avoid disappointment, illness, suffering and death. In these moments, the gospel can bring us comfort and inner peace, so that, in the grace of God, we may become stronger and move forward on the path ahead.

There is a point of view which holds that the growth of the church is due to the fact that people harbour doubts and a sense of despair about the situation in which they live. It is as if to say that the proper

development of a society inevitably results in the decline of the church. We Chinese Christians cannot accept this view. If it is said that there has now been an increase in the number of Chinese Christians largely because of the people's despair with our society, then why was it after more than one hundred years of missionary work in the old China, when people were struggling for survival on the verge of death, in indescribable physical suffering and spiritual despair, why was there then no substantial increase in the number of church members? If we say that people who are satisfied in their social life are no longer in need of the gospel, then how can we say that we have faith in the power of God? One of the most important reasons that many people in old China were unwilling to accept the gospel was that the church was bound together with unjust power, thus obscuring the light of truth. Today we have dissociated ourselves from the regime of unjust power so as to allow the light of the gospel to shine forth once again. We believe in Jesus Christ as the truth, and the cross of Jesus Christ will draw all people unto him. It would be a sorry state of affairs if the development of Christianity were largely dependent upon people's difficulties, sufferings and despair over society.

But even though God is omnipotent, and although people are in eternal need of him, the key to spreading the gospel lies in the witness of the church.

The mission of the church is to preach the gospel. But this "preaching" is not simply to transmit the content of certain Christian teachings to others. Instead, it is carried out through the witness of the church. It is as Jesus said, "You are my witnesses of these things". The meaning of the word "witness" in the New Testament is to express and verify one's faith, that which one personally believes, in both word and deed. The word for witness in Chinese is *jianzheng* (見證). *Jian* means to see with one's own eyes, while *zheng* means to provide proof or give testimony. *Jianzheng* then, means to provide evidence or give testimony to those things which one has personally experienced. Today the church must make known to the people the Jesus which she has personally experienced.

Over the last few years, the Chinese church has learned three things in bearing witness to the gospel:

1. The Church must spread the gospel in one accord

The church is the body of Christ, and its limbs should be paired with one another under the head, Jesus Christ. Before Jesus left this

world, he especially prayed for the unity of his disciples. However, the sad fact is that the church, especially since the Reformation, has been deeply divided. Each denomination one-sidedly emphasizes that part of the truth which it sees, and a great deal of energy is consumed in internecine struggles. Or, they go about "enticing the lambs" to change denominations, even though this results in no increase in the number of lambs in the kingdom. All of this is humiliating the name of the Lord, and it greatly obstructs the spreading of the gospel.

When in earlier days the Chinese church was under the influence of Western missionary societies, we also walked this crooked path. When a believer joined a denomination, he or she would selectively uphold certain theological viewpoints and forms of church organization, even though many denominational differences were completely determined by a foreign denominational background. For example, America had its Southern and Northern Baptists, but because of the way their missionary spheres of influence were divided up, Baptists in Southern China were called "Northern Baptists", while those in the North were "Southern Baptists".

After the founding of New China, such factors were eradicated. Chinese Christians reasoned that insofar as we believed in one Lord and Saviour, and because our common mission was to bear witness to Him in our motherland, why was it necessary to wrangle over such secondary questions as church institutions, rituals and the interpretation of Scripture. The denominations came together through co-operation in work and union worship services. Although there were some groups which were not very keen on working with others, when they began to see Christians in other churches who also loved the Lord, they too put aside their self-centered pride and joined in. Although we cannot now say that we have achieved unity, we have truly tasted "brotherly harmony in dwelling together". Rarely do we speak of our former church or denominational ties when we come together for worship, for we are all under one Lord. No matter where or when we worship, regardless of what forms are used, we believe that as long as we worship in spirit and in truth, we will receive the grace of the Lord just the same.

With regard to different theological points of view, we respect the exhortation of Paul: there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are varieties of service, but the same Lord (I Cor 12 : 4, 12). Some people say, "There are four Gospels, not one; the New Testament contains the letters of Paul, but those of Peter and John as well;

although there are different styles of writing, together they comprise one Bible which bears witness to the Lord". We need to learn the lesson of humility, and look for the good qualities which are in other people, "forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". (Eph 4 : 1-3). Today, in our churches, when a person wants baptism, he or she is free to choose between sprinkling and immersion. Everyone practises mutual respect, so that the abundance of Christ may be made manifest.

We understand the unity of the church can itself be a powerful form of witness, for only in the unity of hearts and minds will the gospel flourish.

2. Christians must live a life based on love, and bear witness to the Lord through their actions

God so loved humankind that he sent his only Son, the Word incarnate, to accomplish the work of salvation. The best method by which people may be led to grasp this great love of God for them is through Christian witness. And this witness cannot only be in word, most importantly, it must be in actions.

In the past, Chinese Christians, influenced by some habits of speech current in the Western churches, emphasized the mutual opposition between belief and unbelief, thus isolating themselves in the tiny world of the church. In the new society, Christians have discovered that there are many good people about them, and that, although these people have not yet accepted Christ, they do many good things which serve the people. How can we not love these people and sincerely cooperate with them? If we review Christian teaching, we see that we must love not only "our brothers and sisters" but "everyone". In order to realize the extent of God's love, Christians must tear down the wall dividing us from non-believers, go among the broad masses of the people and merge with them.

During these past years, we are very happy that many Chinese Christians have made a beautiful witness for the Lord through their everyday actions in their various places of work. They have followed the teachings of the Bible in their lives, conscientiously doing very ordinary jobs, and have gained the trust of the masses. Some have been chosen as advanced workers or as workers' representatives truly serving as the light and salt in the world. During the period when the churches were forced to close, there were still those who came forward to believe in the Lord. This was the fruit of the beautiful witness of these Christian lives.

Please allow me to tell you a bit of my own experience. Previously I worked as a pastoral worker in the church. My only contact with those outside the church was as objects of evangelization. It seemed I always assumed a higher status. With the Cultural Revolution, I worked in a factory for 8 years. This was a completely new life for me. It took more than 10 of us cooperating in the workshop to complete the day's duties. I was just an ordinary worker in the collective. We worked together. We exercised, rested, studied and laughed together, and became true friends. There was a childless solitary old worker who contracted cancer. Some workers and myself requested that the factory authorities not only pay for his hospitalization, but also arrange special care for him so that he could die in peace. When one of our female colleagues was badly hurt in an auto accident, I went voluntarily to the hospital to help look after her; now she has recovered. At the factory I never kept my faith a secret. I feel that factory life helped me grasp more deeply why, at Jesus' birth, the angels announced the good news to shepherds tending their flock. Jesus' exhortation to "preach the gospel to the poor" has a deep significance for us. At the same time, I discovered that the workers understood me and because of this began to come into contact with the reality of Christian faith. When the churches were reopened, some people said to me, "Is it all right if we go to church with you?" Of course they were welcomed. Similar experiences are common among Chinese Christians.

3. Church workers should bear the responsibility for preaching the gospel in their nation and their church

At the time when no one in Caesaria and Macedonia believed in Jesus, Peter and Paul received instructions in a vision to go to those places to preach the gospel. But after the disciples had preached the gospel in a place, they always turned the responsibility for church administration over to the local presbyters and deacons, rather than manage it for them. Even in Corinth, a city of 60-70,000 persons where Paul preached for 18 months, he baptised no one except Crispus and Gaius. Paul said he had but laid a foundation, so that "... another man (could) build upon it" (I Cor 3 : 10). As for those places where the church was already established, Paul would not go there to do evangelistic work, "lest I build on another man's foundation" (Rom 15 : 20). Various problems might sometimes arise in the churches in different places, which is not at all surprising. But the apostles sent only letters to advise and encourage, and never became personally involved.

We believe the principles used by the apostles to establish the church should still be followed today. The Chinese church was established long ago. But before Liberation, it can generally be said that control was always in the hands of foreigners. It never became an independent church and therefore was never able to witness effectively to the gospel among the Chinese people. The launching of the Christian 3-Self Patriotic Movement in 1950, there appeared a truly self-administering, self-supporting, and self-propagating church which not only changed the image of Christianity in the eyes of the people, but more importantly, began to change the church into one for which Chinese Christians themselves took responsibility and to build a Christianity which could take root in Chinese soil. This was an extremely great change, a landmark in the development of the church, which paved the way for the broad propagation of the gospel in China. We hope Christians abroad can also see this point and not do anything which would be to the detriment of the witness of the Chinese church.

The reason the apostles applied this principle in establishing churches was that they had received revelation through their personal experience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is recorded in the Book of Acts that at the heart of the debate at the First Jerusalem meeting was whether or not Gentiles must be circumcised after becoming Christians. Jesus, as a Jewish man, had been circumcised. But, if after the gospel had been preached to the Gentiles, the Gentiles were required to follow the Hebrew practise and be circumcised, it would become a yoke that they could not bear. Because of their personal experience in preaching the gospel in these places, Peter and Paul used a method of accommodation and solved the problem appropriately.

The heart of the gospel is everlasting and unchanging, but the systems, rules and methods used by the church to witness must be suited to local conditions, appropriate for local political, and economic situations as well as the thought, cultural background and local conditions and customs. Of course the actual situation of the church today differs greatly from that of the apostolic era. The gospel has already been preached to the ends of the earth, though in every country and every locality, there are still places without the gospel. The responsibility for preaching the gospel in these places falls to local Christian believers, especially upon the shoulders of those who have been called to preach. This is because they share a common language and life experience, common thinking and feelings with their people.

Only they truly understand the needs of the people around them. Because of this they are most qualified to preach the gospel in their given places. In his letters, Paul often asked after certain responsible persons in the local church by name, respecting the position which they had received from the Lord. From this it is clear that one need not necessarily leave one's native place to preach the gospel. If the lamp on each lampstand sheds light to illumine one's own family, then the glory of God must be brightly manifest. Although the experiences I have spoken of today are very superficial, they are drawn from those of the Chinese church in the course of the last 30 years. Without personal experience in a place even if we have the wish of preaching the gospel, I'm afraid it would not be easy, and even less for the people of the land to respond to this kind of witness.

We are deeply aware that the mission of the Chinese church is a formidable one, and that we are but useless servants. But, as the Lord has entrusted us with the responsibility for preaching the gospel in this vast land of China, we can only humbly accept the call. In every age, it is God who leads the churches in each place. We certainly don't regard our own experience as complete, even less do we think that churches in other places must follow our road. I have but put some of the light which the Chinese church has seen before you, according to my own interpretation. I would sincerely ask brothers and sisters from the different nations to pray for us and to discuss these things in common on the basis of equality and friendship in order to help us in China establish a church which truly glorifies God and is beneficial to humankind.



Miss. Tsao Seng-chieh (China), Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostam (India).

Christian Witness-bearing in Chinese Political Life

Han Wen-zao

Participation in China's political life is a new question which Chinese Christians first faced in the period immediately following the establishment of New China.

Why is it that I call this a *new* question?

For one thing, the establishment of New China changed the situation in which the KMT of old China regarded the political system as one of "political tutelage" of the people. New China set up People's Congresses and People's Political Consultative Conferences on various levels allowing the masses of the people, including every layer of society and every nationality, to be able to have broad participation in the nation's political life to discuss the important affairs of the nation. As far as we know, this is the broadest system of political participation by the people in our nation's history, even though there is still room for improvement and development. To speak of every layer and every nationality refers to the workers, peasants, educators, technicians, medical workers, people from commercial fields, Chinese returned from abroad, literary and arts workers, people from fields such as physical culture and journalism, women and youth, almost 10 democratic parties, several dozen minority nationalities, and so forth. Religious believers are by no means excluded. Besides Protestants, there are Catholic, Buddhist, Taoist and Muslim friends involved in political life. This was a new situation for us: were we to be like other people in our society, merging with them on a political level and participating with them in our nation's political life, or were we to stay away as a group apart?

There is a second reason why this was a new question for us. Because of the political corruption of old China, Christians of our age had a distaste for politics. Any discussion of politics was associated

with political infighting, playing politics, political intrigue and trickery, vicious calumny, speaking out of both sides of one's mouth, the unscrupulous use of threats and rewards, and so forth. In our eyes these set phrases and terms were synonymous with politics. To put it in a word, we thought that politics was sinful. And for this reason those who participated in politics were also sinful. Would not participation in the national political life of New China then also be what theologians refer to as continually being forced to choose between two evils?

Insofar as the government of New China is led by a political party which openly professes disbelief in God, would Christians ever be able to cooperate with atheists in the national political life?

In the face of these new questions, we hesitated and had doubts. But God provided us with the wisdom and power to distinguish right from wrong, leading us to come up with the answer. Over the last 30 years, more and more Christians and fellow-workers from every place throughout the country have been selected as delegates to all People's Congresses (PCs) or chosen as members for all levels of the People's Political Consultative Conferences (PPCCs). As Chinese citizens who are concerned with our national fate, and who hope to bear witness to the Lord, we gladly accept this opportunity which has been given us by the people. At the same time, as we have taken part in our national political life over the last 30 years, through our prayers and Bible study, we have received new light from God, so that we have become more and more clear that this is His will for us.

Let me now elaborate these three points, one by one:

1. Should the church merge with the masses of the people or rather set itself as a group apart?

In the light of Chinese church history, we can see that, as a result of the unfortunate connection of Christianity with Western colonialism, most Western missionaries infected Chinese Christians with their own ignorance of or prejudices towards the Chinese people's movement for liberation, thereby inhibiting Chinese Christians from merging with the masses of the Chinese people on a political level. We were not able to breathe as one with the popular masses, sharing the same fate. We could share neither in the sorrows or the hopes of the Chinese people, nor could we think as they did. Twenty-five years ago, after the Japanese professor from International Christian University, Mrs Kiyoko Takeda, visited China, she wrote an essay in which she said,

“Because of the missionaries, the Chinese church (or we could say, Chinese Christians) are close to the foreigners, but they are far from the people of their motherland.” She put it quite aptly. Despite the fact that some Chinese church leaders made efforts to establish an indigenous church since the 1920’s or earlier, seeking a national church structure, the indigenization of church hymnody and religious art, etc., their efforts if not completely futile were never able to open the door to the effective preaching of the gospel on Chinese soil. The most important reason for this was a political one, namely, that they could not identify with the masses of the Chinese people. The Bible records that Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt so that they could become a free people and freely worship the one true God. This was only because he was able to leave the life of the Egyptian Pharaohs, “Choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:25). Only after this, could he do what he had to do. When he was chosen by God, he was no longer the Son of Pharaoh’s daughter, but had merged with the people. The Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the Word became flesh, came to save the people of the world, and daily showed himself among the people, sharing in their worries and rejoicing in their happiness, extending his hand to the paralytic, comforting the troubled in Spirit, preaching the gospel to the poor, bringing liberty to the captives and sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. The gospel spread widely in the early church because brothers and sisters within the church loved and cared for each other, followed the teaching of the Apostles, and received the favour of the masses. But the Chinese church, in days past, went against these teachings.

Now, 30 years after the establishment of New China, one billion people are fed and clothed; there is neither hunger nor want. This would have been unimaginable in Old China. Today, New China continues to benefit the people. The Bible teaches us that if a brother or sister is in need, and we say to them, go in peace, be warm and filled without giving the things needed for the body, what good is it? (James 2:14-17). Are we able to set ourselves apart from our one billion Chinese people? If we set ourselves apart from them, we can never obtain their favour and we only lose any possibility of bearing witness among them. In the last 30 years the vast majority of our nations’ Christians have identified themselves with the masses of the Chinese people on a political level. Relying on the love of God, we have loyally and energetically taken part in the work of the reconstruction of the motherland. We have conscientiously taken part in our national poli-

tical life. Before God we have served the people, and have, thereby, accomplished something for our own spiritual life, growing in faith and love. The people have observed our good actions, which were done to the glory of Jesus Christ and because of this, the gospel has been opened up and the number of Christians has increased. China's Christians are spread out in every corner of society. Cherishing both the church and the motherland, and testifying to the glory of Jesus Christ in their places of work is the important task which has today resulted in our leading more and more people to become Christians.

Let me offer a few simple examples. Colleagues at Nanking Union Seminary have had the opportunity to open up a series of lectures on Christianity at the famous Nanking University. These have attracted several hundred listeners.

The news of the reopening of Nanking Union Seminary has been reported in several publications and broadcast on TV and radio. The second day after the news broke, we received many letters making applications for admission.

In Guangxi there was a pastor who for almost 10 years had been working in a food factory and had, on a number of occasions, been chosen as a model worker and as a workers' representative. On one occasion, in a people's congress, he spoke of Christianity. At that time, several representatives from educational circles who were attending the meeting, asked him to notify them when his church had been reopened for worship so that they could attend.

A short while ago, Bishop Ting was invited by the CPPCC committee of Jiangsu province to introduce the subject of Christianity to the democratic parties, other delegates and political cadres, and the response was very friendly.

There is no need to continue with more examples, but these show that over the last 30 years there has been a significant development in the identification of Chinese Christians with the efforts of our nation's people. The conditions have been established for the identification of the Chinese people and Chinese Christianity. These examples also show that the participation of Christians in our nation's political life is helpful in bearing witness to the gospel.

2. Is politics sinful?

To say that it is impossible in politics not to continually have to choose between two evils is a short and clever statement which gives a sense of satisfaction to some people. But from the perspective of poli-

tical practice in New China, this statement suffers from over-simplification. We believe that in some cases, politics is most certainly the choice between two evils, but it is sometimes the choice between the good and the better and sometimes between good and evil.

There have been many sayings among our people in old China showing animosity to officialdom, such as "Behind the vermilion gates meat and wine go to waste, while out on the road lie the bones of those frozen to death"; "The magistrates are free to burn down houses, while the common people are forbidden even to light lamps"; "The Yamen (officials') gate is open wide, however, if you have a cause but no money, don't go inside." Such sayings arose in old China as a true reflection of the old society. Shortly after the establishment of the New China, however, there were many changes among the people, changes which developed in our very midst. Political life led by a Party which openly disavows belief in God, and the things which it has accomplished, along with the changes it has been able to bring about, are the very things which we Christians had wanted to do all along but were incapable of. It has, for example, transformed prostitutes into new women who no longer need sell their bodies in order to stay alive, who no longer need be humiliated by any man who comes along, but have now developed an independent character. It has eradicated the use of drugs, which had debilitated the bodies of many people, causing men and women to become dejected and apathetic, and has awakened them from lethargy to a new life. And it has helped others to avoid following the same path. It strictly forbade gambling, which had caused the loss of many families' wealth and the criminalization of many people who had become opportunistic and avaricious, doing nothing that was worthwhile. The politics of New China eradicated all of these evils so that we could not but offer up our thanks and our praise. To be sure, the 10 year disaster of the Cultural Revolution brought with it a profound lesson for us. The fascist politics spread by the "Gang of Four" during these 10 years caused us to go one step further toward recognition of the corruptive character of backstage power. Although this was the case of the the "Gang of Four", we were still able to see that to unanalytically term politics sinful in a sweeping way is both corruptive and inappropriate. An over generalized view can easily become one-sided. To get at the root of the matter, there will always be that power and politics in human society which seems to realize justice as well as that which upholds reaction and injustice. Although the power and politics which seek to realize justice will never be able to replace the function of the salvific power

of Christianity, yet it ought never to be spoken of in the same fashion as that which supports and upholds the forces of reaction and injustice.

It was Calvin who placed such a strong emphasis on saving grace and election. But when he spoke of the Roman emperors of the 1st Century, he said, "I do not so dissent from the common judgment as to contend that there is no difference between the justice, moderation and equity of Titus and Trajan and the madness, intemperance and savagery of Caligula, Nero or Domitian, and that of the barbarians. I also do not think that in politics and law it makes no difference whether you obey. On this point, my opinion is no different from that of any other person."

If, as it is said, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, then we have to ask, who would profit by it all? Is it not to ask the powerless and oppressed people to be happy in their powerlessness and content not to struggle for power, so as to allow power and influence to be concentrated in the hands of a minority which can do whatever it wishes, and act wildly in the face of public opinion? This is not good news for the powerless and the oppressed, but only for those with power and influence who perpetrate evil deeds. Power has an objective existence. Those theologians who want the people to give up power and who write about this in their books which have been disseminated widely, are really wielding great power themselves.

With the establishment of New China and the transfer of power to the people, although the corruptive side of power still exists, what stands out more is the creative character of people's power. That the people use power to eradicate social evils and establish social justice, should be welcomed. Because those who are involved in the Chinese experiment are after all human, and because they are those who still carry the influences and burdens of the old society, there has been a certain amount of staggering along in the process of this experiment, causing some well-meaning observers to lose hope. But this experiment is something new in human history, something which we love and cherish and not something which we hate and want to let die.

In sum, the oppressors and exploiters in history have all wanted to concentrate power in their own hands. All of them want the people to be content in their powerlessness and afraid to seize power. We today are different. We are with the people and have learned how to consolidate power, so as to hold our fate in our own hands. We are

working to create a society in which love is made possible for the masses.

I have already spoken of the fact that even after power has been turned over into the hands of the people, its corruptive influence still exists. Therefore, we who take part in our nation's political life cannot ignore the unjust aspects of society. Today, more than ever before in New China, we are able effectively to investigate, expose, criticize and correct injustice. Due to the limitations of time, however, I will not at this time offer examples.

3. Can Christians cooperate politically with atheists?

For a long time, Christians have been a tiny minority in China, and there has therefore been the question of living together with non-Christians, including those who are atheists. This is true also of many Asian societies. But there is a great difference between our living together with atheists before and after liberation. Before the founding of New China the atheist voice was not very loud and we didn't have to pay much attention to them. But since the founding of New China, we have found it necessary to live together with atheists who have a theory, a policy and an organized political party. This political party is also in a position of political leadership. But precisely because they have a theory, a policy and an organization, they adopt a policy of religious freedom on the basis of their theory. Moreover, by means of their organization they fully implement their theory into every area of the country and at every level. In the 17 years before the Cultural Revolution, this policy was in general implemented rather well. Although here and there there were sometimes instances in which this policy was violated, by and large they could always be satisfactorily resolved by appealing to the Religious Affairs Bureau of the government after appropriate investigation and discussion. This policy was severely trampled upon and destroyed during the 10 calamitous years of the Cultural Revolution. The "Gang of Four" not only destroyed the religious policy but also destroyed many other correct policies of the Communist Party, such as the policies toward intellectuals and toward national minorities, and its overseas Chinese policy. Policies affecting workers, peasants and soldiers, women, educators and health workers, as well as those which dealt with the cadres were also destroyed. It is for this reason that we say the Gang of Four is not the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party is not the "Gang of Four". This is a conclusion drawn from our experience. This is looking at the problem in its essence, not from its form.

Thanks to the destructive hand of the "Gang of Four", the Chinese people have all learned a good lesson. We have come to understand the danger of ultra-leftism and the value of a correct line and a correct policy. After the smashing of the "Gang of Four" the correct policies of the Chinese Communist Party have been re-implemented, including the religious policy. I say that they have been *re-implemented* even though they have undergone some development, because they were the original policies. For example, this year for the first time, the Penal Code of the People's Republic of China, article 147, stipulates, "If governmental officials interfere with the right of religious freedom of the people or violate the customs and habits of the national minorities, it is a serious offence which is subject to up to two years imprisonment or detention. "This is a new regulation under the guidance of the national policy of religious freedom. It is a new development. Naturally the policy of religious freedom is important to us, but we cannot rest upon this policy and hope that the gospel will naturally become accepted in China. The preaching of the gospel, in the main, depends upon the witness of those of us who are Christians. Nevertheless, we still think this policy important.

For atheists to adopt such a policy means that they wish to work for better relations with theists. And what about us? Our 30-year experience has enabled us to see more clearly the teaching of the Bible. God has wanted us to learn the lesson of humility. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou has hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes (Luke 10:21)." If one regards himself as smart, if one believes that he has done what is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, then truth will not be revealed to him. After we have become Christians, if we continually believe that it is God who has chosen us, and if we regard those who are non-Christians as the children of hell, and if we think we are better than other people, we will become arrogant as if our hands hold the key to the Kingdom and there is nothing we cannot do. But nothing can obstruct the power of the Lord. When the Israelites turned against God and were carried into captivity, it was the will of God that the Persian king Cyrus chastise them (Ezra 1). We might well ponder the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to act as the Samaritan did, and have compassion for our neighbour. Today, there is an atheistic political party leading the government of the New China which is trying to serve the people. Why shouldn't we be able to cooperate with them?

We believe that God is the Lord of the universe and the Lord of history. His message is for all the people. As we cooperate with

atheists we are happy to learn how true they are to their ideals and ethical standards. We regret they do not recognize the existence of this Lord. As we live with them, we discover that the God whom they say does not exist, is definitely not the God whom we recognize as Christians. For example, if we describe God as hating the Chinese people, or say that the aggressor who trampled upon the Chinese people was doing the will of God in order to punish us, how can this kind of God be helpful in allowing atheists to understand the Lord of the universe? Therefore, it is most important to seriously examine the nature of the God we believe in. We do believe that, because our view of God is inadequate, the truth of the gospel cannot be revealed to the atheist.

We are a small and relatively weak church. God has placed us in an environment which is different from that of other churches and has given us new light. We wish to tell you that our experience and what we have received is quite minimal and that we have a great deal to learn from other churches in Asia. We are forever reminding ourselves that before God we must be humble and careful. "Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways" (Romans 11:33). By no means do we wish to be limited by the narrowness of our own vision, but with open hearts to continue to receive the true light given to us in diverse ways by the Holy Spirit in the days ahead.



Mr. Moon Kyu Kang (Korea), Rt. Rev. K.H. Ting (China) U Kyaw Than (Burma)

Theological Education in China

K H Ting

We are grateful for the tremendous amount of attention you have been giving to the situation of the churches in China. But, as it always happens when the child is given too much attention it is likely to be spoilt.

Nanking Theological Seminary

Theological education is a subject on which we would particularly like to learn from the experiences of our Asian fellow-Christians. We are only trying to find our way. During the years before the Cultural Revolution we maintained the Theological Seminary in Nanking which was and is a union Theological Seminary. The range of co-operation within the seminary is very wide. We have evangelicals—strong evangelical groups—as well as colleagues from theological seminaries run by many mainline churches. During the years of the Cultural Revolution, this seminary was closed down following an announcement to that effect made by a group of Red Guards. During the early days of the Cultural Revolution the Red Guards came to the seminary to search out what was called the “Four Olds” in those days, and many of the books in our library were burned or taken away. We stopped working. Most of our faculty members had to go to work on a farm near Nanking and some of us were allowed to stay in our homes awaiting the assignment of new work, although this assignment did not come at all. Since the downfall of the Gang of Four, we have again formed ourselves into the Nanking Union Theological Seminary.

At present we really are two things; we have two existences. In the first place we are a theological seminary of the Protestant Churches in China, and at the same time we are also the Centre of Religious Studies at Nanking University. It is a very interesting piece of work which we try to do in Nanking University.

As for theological education, we think the goal we set for ourselves is the producing of Chinese people's Christian intellectuals. We in China need intellectuals of all sorts. Among them we need Christian intellectuals. It is a special characteristic of Chinese Protestantism that it has emphasised the work amongst the intellectuals and it has a large number of intellectual converts to Christianity in the course of the history of Protestantism in China. We need to produce more of these Christians intellectuals. We say these intellectuals have to be Chinese; they need to be concerned with the problems of China. In old China our theological seminary seemed to be interested in problems which China had not raised. The problems dealt with in our classrooms appeared to be problems raised by Christians in other countries.

We also say these intellectuals must be the people's intellectuals. That is, politically and culturally our graduates have to identify themselves with the common people of China. These Christian intellectuals ought to be those who have dedicated themselves to the work of the church and to the work of evangelism in China. They can be pastors and evangelists in local parishes. They can be teachers. They can serve on the staff of Christian organisations—national or provincial. We need writers, translators and artists. We need experts in technology with theological training and teachers with theological training. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution we have a new group of people in academic circles who devote themselves to the study of religions. We hope our Theological Seminary will produce some of these people too. And of course we need to train more teachers for our Theological Seminary.

At present, we try to do two things at the same time. One is to elevate the theological level of our membership and the other is to popularise theological knowledge. We feel that the work of popularisation and elevation could go together. For the time being we emphasize popularisation more than elevation, but if we take a longer period into consideration then elevation of the level of theological education will be even more important. As far as popularisation is concerned, our seminary is at present producing a syllabus by the Correspondence Department. This is a booklet published monthly and sent out once in three months. At first we thought a few hundred copies would be sufficient and at that time we thought we could do it as a correspondence course. But the need is so great that this little publication has now a circulation of 30,000 copies. So you should not think we can keep up correspondence with 30,000 people in China. This really

now is a magazine. We call it a syllabus. This is sent to those "naturally evolved" leaders of Christian groups all over China.

Leadership Training

Although we have re-opened a number of churches since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the number of Christians worshipping in churches is still smaller than those who worship in homes. These home meetings are under the leadership of leaders who are "naturally evolved", who are better qualified and more enthusiastic. These home gatherings are found to be very fulfilling and spiritually uplifting by the participants. But because of the lack of leadership, deviations of all kinds could happen and we hope that through this syllabus the quality and content of these meetings could be improved. We are now able to link ourselves with 30,000 of these non-traditional "naturally evolved" group leaders. As to direct theological instruction, we have for the first time now 48 students. They should be of two types. The majority, we thought, should be graduates of Senior Middle Schools; a smaller number university graduates. At present we have not divided the students into two groups. We put them together at least for the first term. Probably we could differentiate by the end of the term.

Theological Curriculum

The subjects of our theological education are more or less the same as those in theological seminaries outside China. I think the content will be found to be different and may well become more and more different. We think our theological education ought to be centred on problems that we face as Christians within China. For instance, the very interesting and illuminating discussion we had—I think it was yesterday—about those five Chinese Christian thinkers. The presentation by Prof Ng and the contributions in the group were all very instructive and interesting to me personally. At least two of our colleagues in Nanking who are experts in Chinese Church history will probably say that the main problem with all those five thinkers was that they were entirely oblivious of the most important reality in China in the 50's and 40's and that was the existence of the people's liberation movement—the movement for national salvation in areas of Kuomintang and the existence of the liberated area under Communist leadership in North China and the north-west.

These theological thinkers usually write things up without any knowledge of the existence of the most important political and cultural

realities. I think at least four of these five thinkers, if they are living today, will probably acknowledge that this was true and they might probably tell us they would like that chapter of their writings to be closed. So the study of Chinese church history in China will result in something quite different, and we hope before very long we can present this history to Christians in Asia for criticism and for comment. I think a large part of the content of our theological education has to be related to the many new currents of thinking in Chinese intellectual circles today. Since the downfall of the Gang of Four there has appeared many magazines to which social scientists and philosophers contribute. In our Nanking Theological Seminary we subscribe to 60 or 70 of them. If we turn over the pages of these magazines we find very many articles dealing with subjects which do not seem to interest academic people abroad but, we think, are extremely important to Christian witness in China.

Idealism as Progressive - now they can discuss after cultural reform

One area of discussion is whether idealism has any positive or progressive or revolutionary role in history. During the years of ultra-leftism, this subject would have been taboo. It would be unthinkable to say anything good about idealism. It is universally assumed that all schools of philosophy belong either to idealism or materialism. If you think that idea is primary, if you give primacy to ideas over matter, then that is idealism. If you think that matter is the first reality, that ideas grow out of material existence, then that will be materialism. Every philosopher would belong to one of these groups.

During the days of the Gang of Four, when ultra-leftism was the ruling ideology, nothing good could be perceived in idealism. Now I am not saying that this is a proper division and I am not saying that Christianity ought to be considered a part of the idealistic or materialistic school. But it is a fact today that hundreds of articles have appeared in our magazines of philosophy and of social sciences discussing whether idealism has any progressive role in history.

Evangelistic Approaches

Now, among us Christians, there are two approaches to the question of evangelism. There are those who think that the only sharp line to be drawn is between belief and unbelief or between believers and non-believers. On both sides people are more or less of the same type. There should not be any differentiation among the believers. They

form one bloc. The non-believers are also a bloc by themselves. There is no change or difference in view among the non-believers. In other words all in the camp of non-believers, no matter what point of view they hold, are equally distant, and equally unhelpful in our preaching of the gospel or evangelism. Therefore, the inner development within the camp of the materialist is of no interest to us. We say in Chinese, "within that camp everything is just black". I think when this idea was a ruling force directing us in our work of evangelism, then there was a tremendous amount of blindness and haphazardness in our work of evangelism. Sometimes we succeed but sometimes we fail but we would not know why we fail. There is another kind of thinking about our evangelistic task and that is to realise there are many different currents of thinking amongst our intellectuals and certain developments among the intellectuals would make them entirely non-believers. There are certain developments which are beneficial to the introduction of the gospel and there are certain developments which are not beneficial to the introduction of the gospel or the Christian message. To evangelise is not just to tell people of Jesus Christ. To evangelise also includes our attempt to seek a common ground with certain emphases that have evolved in the intellectual field, to seek a common language, and to make use of certain things which we have in common within the intellectual sphere. The discussion of whether idealism has a certain progressive role to play in history seems to be a very important discussion from the evangelistic point of view. Our theological students must not be trained as if such a discussion is not going on around them.

In the second century BC there was a Chinese philosopher, a developer of the ideas of Confucius. He has also been taken under extra-leftism as a model of idealism and nothing progressive could be ascribed to this man. Chairman Mao in his philosophical writings also referred to him as a model of idealism and political reaction. But today there are many articles giving a re-evaluation of his philosophical position. His idealistic emphasis on the role of the human being, the role of man, the dynamic ability of man to master nature and to master society, has been commended as having had a progressive role in history. We have thus many articles in recent months discussing the whole role of idealism.

We may consider the role of some of the classical philosophers in western history, such as philosophers like Hegel, Kant, Schiller—how they in their own philosophical manner prepared for the bourgeois revolution in Germany. This has met with affirmation in many articles

in Chinese magazines. I think, as evangelists, our theological students and our pastors and our theological teachers cannot afford not to pay attention to these developments, especially because religion has always been considered an extreme form of idealism, an extreme form of objective idealism. To affirm the progressive and political role under certain circumstances of idealism opens the gate as it were for the affirmation of the role of Christianity in society. We can find out from the writings of Engels and Karl Marx their affirmation of personalities like Calvin and Luther and Oliver Cromwell. With their religious experience they played a progressive role in history. A little over a year ago I was attending a conference in Hunan of those who are making religion a subject of their specialization in the various Institutes of Social Sciences—this was a conference on religion. I spoke to them about Karl Barth. Not because his theology was especially appealing to these students of religion but as my effort to explain that while we respect each other's religious convictions we can adopt a liberal view as to the political role a theologian could play in history. They have no sympathy with the theological point of view of Karl Barth. But they could appreciate his political role during the Second World War in the work of resistance in Germany. During the Cultural Revolution no difference was made between our philosophical, ideological and theological assumptions on the one hand and the political standpoint on the other. I think it is a very healthy development today in China to make a very clear distinction between people's religion and philosophical convictions which ought to be respected and their political stance. We have many articles that have appeared in newspapers telling readers that such a distinction is important. In religious and philosophical matters we have to respect one another. And in politics, as long as we have a common basis of patriotism, we ought to be united.

It was the Gang of Four who claimed themselves to be materialists. They would be furious if we should tell them that they are idealists. They were very proud of their being materialists. Politically they were certainly much more reactionary than many of us Christians. It is very important that this distinction be made in China today.

Theological education must help our students relate their theological thinking to such developments in our intellectual circles.

Search for Truth

Another very important development among the Chinese intellec-

tuals today, which we Christian intellectuals cannot afford to ignore, is the description of truth, of goodness, and of beauty. We feel that an atmosphere of cynicism is the worst climate for Christian evangelism. In such an atmosphere you will find no seriousness in your audience. Young people talk about truth, beauty and goodness even though they are far away from the Christian gospel. We have good reason to welcome that discussion. For the past two years, many articles have appeared especially on what is the test of truth. There are two answers. The first answer is that truth is what Marx said, truth is what Engels and Lenin said, truth is what Chairman Mao said. This school of thought can be called the "whateverist". This group seems to be less and less popular in intellectual circles in China today. More and more intellectuals still show very high respect for the teachings of Marx, Engels and Chairman Mao. They say it is practice (praxis) which gives validity to the truth—the ultimate test. In other words the "whateverists" are actually advocating the infallibility of these classical Marxist teachings. Those who advocate practice as a test of truth claim a more scientific attitude. Because they want to establish truth from facts.

Another very important subject of discussion is the meaning of life. I do not know of any other country in the world where the subject of the meaning of life—what is the good life—receives such tremendous attention as in China, although I am ready to be corrected. In just one single magazine in China which is called the *Youth of China*, in six months the editorial office received over 60,000 letters discussing the very question of the meaning of life and the question of what is good. Now I think we as evangelists will find it very difficult to communicate with an audience if it is an audience of cynics who have no interest in what is good. If their only question is, why should I be good, why should I not be selfish, it is very difficult for Christian communication to happen. But today a very large number of young people, workers and educated youth in rural people's communes and students, would like to know what is a good life. The girl who started the whole discussion with a letter, which was a very pessimistic one, herself was very greatly moved by the whole discussion. She received many gifts sent to her by her sympathisers—books and money and other things. She thought it was very important that all the gifts she got should be sent to an orphanage for those boys and girls whose parents were killed in an earthquake near Peking a few years back. So, in spite of all her pessimism, I feel she has not lost her conviction about the meaning of life and the place of service to others. And

in all this discussion Christians would find a common language with these non-Christians. I can say more about beauty. There is a lot of discussion on beauty. Recently we have organised the national association of philosophers of ethics and another association of aesthetics. Recently our newspapers have been advocating five stresses—the stress on five things,—on civilized life, on good manners, on hygienic living, on order and on morality. Besides these, there are four beauties. The spiritual beauty, the beauty in the use of language, beauty in conduct and beauty in our environment. These are not promoted by Christians, but we feel that these emphases provide the Christians with a good environment for Christian communication.

Theological Agenda

Our theological education should not be detached from all that is going on around us. We can make use of all of these as a common starting point. There are so many currents of non-Christian thought going on all around us, and our theological education should not be detached from all these. And there is of course a lot of discussion on religion itself, on the religion of Christianity—on the role of religion, whether religion as an opiate is a sufficient definition for religion. And with these problems we should relate our theological education. Then there are many problems within our churches. We call ourselves the China Christian Council because the China Christian Council is not a church. They have many problems that we have not solved yet and we need students to study all of these. Quite a number of our friends here have discussed with me the question of liberation theology—whether we in Chinese Christianity take much interest in liberation theology. May I say a few words about that. We do not know very much about liberation theology. We know we are for liberation and we are for theology and we are also for liberating theology from its bondage to western history, to colonialism, and so on. From what we gather from books on liberation theology we are very sympathetic with its emphasis on the necessity for a change in social systems, with its opposition to reformism, with its criticism of social developmentism, with its stand for liberation and for revolution, and with its relating theology not only to philosophy but even more to social sciences. Of all of these we really are very appreciative, very sympathetic. Its emphasis that theology should not only be responsible to our church traditions but should have an accountability for the reconstruction of human history—we think that is great. But many of my Christian colleagues would hesitate to say that they themselves are

liberation theologians because we somehow feel that we must not relativise the absolute or absolutise the relative. I can make it clear by a reference to a recent article in *The Christian Century* written by James Cone whom we respect highly as a black theologian. He said in this article, "I still contend that the gospel is identical with the liberation of the poor people from social-political oppression." Now he didn't say that Christian Gospel supports or requires this. He said that it is identical with and it is this word we would hesitate to use. We are very sensitive on this matter. Probably because we are post-liberation. We sympathise with the liberation theologians' support of the poor and concern for material uplift. But we feel that Christian theology must deal first of all with the relationship between human beings and God. That is a much more ultimate question which theology must not shy away from. We in China needed liberation. We do not want to return to our pre-liberation days. Yet we do not think that political liberation is a solution to that much more ultimate problem—the problem between human beings and the ultimate ground on which the whole universe is structured. The question of life in Jesus Christ—that, somehow we feel that liberation theologians have not dealt with adequately. Maybe we need to read more of their books. New China has definitely produced better men and women but these better men and better women are not the same as the "new man" that St Paul speaks of. I am very grateful that my colleague spoke about St Augustine's remark: "Thou hast put a restlessness in our heart so that we would find no rest until we rest in Thee". This restlessness is something that we experience even after our political liberation. As to the sympathies for the poor, while we are in agreement with liberation theologians, we from our own experience think that it is not something to absolutise. In post-liberation China we still have poor people. We haven't achieved complete equalitarianism. There are people who leave the poverty line earlier than the rest. There are people who get a little richer before the others. I think it is the law of social change that if our policy is to identify ourselves always with the poor, to fight against the more wealthy, then society would be chaotic. There can't be any national re-construction to speak of. The very suffering that we experienced during the days of the Cultural Revolution was exactly due to the doctrine of perpetual revolution of the poor against the wealthy, and that is why we would hesitate to idealise the poor—not to say that the poor sometimes can be exploited by certain deceivers.

As to the many problems which western theologians seem to be interested in just now, we would only select those that are of imme-

ciate interest to us. Homosexuality, we do not seem to be aware of that problem so acutely in China. Feminism, to the extent of changing the language of the Bible and liturgy—we haven't felt that to be a very pressing problem; nor the ordination of women. Our question at present is the question of ordination itself. As to women's ordination I do not think it is an acute problem with us. Nor is the question of church unity. Our perspective is quite different and I do not think we are going to use all the western material. The question of atheism is a very interesting question to many of our colleagues in China because in China atheism is a very open and legitimate ideology. We know that atheism is a universal problem but in other societies it is not so noticeable. In the US only six per cent of the population would declare themselves to be non-believers of God. For us to exclude God from the concerns of the world is also to exclude the world from all our religious experiences. Over there in China we would come across atheistic articles quite often in our magazines. You will find many Chinese Christians not so angry with the atheist because of various reasons. We hope in our theological seminary in Nanking we can have a special centre of some sort for the scientific and theological study of atheism as soon as we can do that.

These are some of our thoughts about theological education. We are way behind all our Asian colleagues in theological education. I would be so grateful if those who are theological educators and other church leaders in Christian churches in other countries could enlighten us with their experiences.



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A Call for Clarity:

Fourteen Points from Christians in the People's Republic of China to Christians Abroad

Bishop K H Ting

There has already been a good deal of reporting on the Chinese Christian situation and on our guiding principles, but there is still some confusion among fellow-Christians overseas, including those in Hongkong. I would like to present some of our views.

1. New China

We Chinese Christians take a positive attitude towards New China. It is not as it was before Liberation when we took a negative attitude towards the cause of the Chinese people's liberation, as a result of misinformation and misunderstanding. Christians cannot deny that New China has brought many good changes to the Chinese people. For over thirty years the price of our food and other necessities has basically been stable. In the past, there were many Chinese people who did not have enough to eat. Now, although special delicacies may be out of our reach, some 900 million people have enough to eat, so that there is no longer the need for people to go scrounging for roots and tree bark. Our approximately ten per cent of the world's arable land feeds almost twenty-five per cent of the world's people. This must certainly be regarded as an amazing accomplishment, even though it is not a miracle. In the past, many people were without adequate clothing. On the streets there were rickshaw pullers, beggars and other poor people who often went barefoot in the rain and snow. Now there are no more riskshaws or beggars, and everyone has shoes and adequate clothing, even a cotton-padded jacket for the winter. The jacket may be patched, but it is no longer worn by several generations as it was before. People's thinking and mental outlook have also undergone significant changes. Despite the ten-year catastrophe, the level of people's morality and self-respect is much higher than it was before Liberation.

For a poverty-stricken people deprived of their rights for thousands of years, to have made mistakes in their first attempt at governing a vast country is only natural. But mistakes cannot stifle the wisdom and character of a people which has stood up. There have been many shortcomings in the thirty-year history of New China, and more than a few mistakes. But summing up both our negative and positive experiences and learning from them, we will once again move forward. Thus, those people overseas who gloat over our misfortunes are really too short-sighted.

For us, patriotism is not just the love of an abstract ancient country with a long history. It is first and foremost a love for New China. Our positive attitude towards New China is genuine and based upon facts. The clamour of certain persons overseas who say that our patriotism is pretentious, with the aim that the Church may survive, is insulting to us. Of course, our patriotism is not without a prophetic and critical character. It does not mean blind praise for everything in our motherland.

2. The Policy of Religious Freedom

We regard the policy of religious freedom in New China to be a reasonable one. Communists do not have a high regard for religion, and we harbour no illusions about the Communist Party on matters of religious faith. But the Communist Party is a good political party which aims at uniting the Chinese people. For the sake of national unity, it maintains respect for the people's customs and special characteristics, including religious ones. It would benefit neither national unity nor socialism if this respect were neglected. The Communist Party understands this better than anyone else and, therefore, advocates the policy of "emphasizing the common ground while preserving differences". "Emphasizing the common ground" refers to the common ground of patriotism. "Preserving differences" means a recognition of and respect for the differences among people, and refraining from trying to eliminate them. Just as the difference between the national minorities and the Han Chinese cannot be eliminated, neither can those between believers and non-believers. Therefore, the Communist Party maintains a policy of religious freedom. We consider this to be a policy as good for religion as it is good for the country.

I am of course speaking of the Communist Party and not of the "Gang of Four". The "Gang of Four" is not the Communist Party

and the Communist Party is not the "Gang of Four". The "Gang of Four" wished to eradicate religion, but the Communist Party seeks to protect religious belief by adopting the policy of religious freedom. Since the smashing of the "Gang of Four", we are returning to the Communist Party's original policy of religious freedom. Overseas there is the mistaken idea that the religious policy of the Communist Party itself has changed or loosened up. This confuses the Communist Party with the "Gang of Four", and is of no help for coming to a correct understanding of New China. Today, the Communist Party is leading the people throughout China in revolution and reconstruction, and the "Gang of Four" has been put on trial in the people's court. To speak of the two as one and the same really creates a lot of confusion.

3. Organizations in New China

China is a properly constituted country. Each of the organizations listed below has its own proper function and sphere of authority, and these should not be confused:

1. The *National People's Congress* (NPC) is our supreme national legislative body. Only the NPC is empowered to approve and revise the Constitution, the Marriage Law, the Penal Code, the Civil Code and other laws. Appointments of important officials, such as the premier, vice-premiers and department heads, must also be approved by the NPC. Deputies to the NPC, which may be both Party and non-Party members, are elected by each province. There are deputies who are religious believers.
2. The *Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference* (CPPCC) is our political consultative body. While NPC deputies are elected by each province, members of the CPPCC come from every corner of Chinese society. Membership is drawn from the youth, women, workers, peasants and soldiers; from the Communist Party and democratic parties; from cultural, athletic, scientific, and religious circles; from the national minorities, overseas Chinese, and people from all walks of life. The CPPCC is an important institution for the promotion of socialist democracy and an important organ of the United Front. There is within the CPPCC a religious group, comprised of Buddhist, Islamic, Taoist, Catholic and Protestant representatives. The 46th article of the present National Constitution stipulates: "Citizens enjoy the freedom

to believe in religion and the freedom not to believe in religion and to propagate atheism". Members of the CPPCC religious group are dissatisfied with this article which preserves a lingering influence of the "Gang of Four" period, and have made a proposal that it be changed. If this proposal for modifying the wording of Article 46 of the Constitution is passed by the next session of the NPC, then we will be happy. If not, we will continue in our efforts.

3. The *State Council* is the administrative or executive organ set up under the NPC. It is the central Government of our country.
4. The *Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB)* of the State Council is set up expressly for the handling of the religious affairs of the State Council. It does not deal with the faith, life and work of Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism and all other religions. There are some people overseas who, consciously or not, have created confusion by saying that the RAB of the State Council supervises us and that Chinese Christian churches and organizations are parts of the RAB. This would be totally at odds with our social and political system. The bulk of the work of the RAB is to represent the state and the government in implementing the policy of religious freedom. For example, when we want to open a church, the RAB assists us by negotiating with all parties concerned. Or, when we need special paper for the printing of Bibles, the RAB helps us arrange for its purchase. In 1980, we bought 82 tons of paper for the printing of 135,000 Bibles. As we will be printing more Bibles in 1981, the RAB will continue to help us with the purchase of paper and arrangements for meeting our printing needs. The RAB of the State Council only handles the religious affairs of the State. As to the development of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the administration of the Chinese Church, these are our own concerns.
5. One important organization in the life of our country is the *Chinese Communist Party*. It is the leading force behind the Chinese revolution and national reconstruction. This leadership is not forced upon the people. After much investigation and study, the Party puts its proposals regarding principles and policies before the NPC, the CPPCC and the people, for their study, revision, approval or adoption. Party members

through their exemplary role mobilize the people for the implementation of the adopted policies.

6. The National Committee of the *Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement* (hereafter the Three-Self Movement) is the patriotic association of Chinese Christians themselves, not a governmental organ. That there are friends overseas who think of the Three-Self Movement as a department of the RAB is the result of the distortion made by certain individuals. The Three-Self Movement was founded by Chinese Christians ourselves. Although there were some missionaries and Chinese Church leaders who advocated Three-Self before Liberation. The Three-Self principle of the Chinese Church could not be implemented full-scale under the historical conditions which prevailed at that time. When Y T Wu and others launched the Three-Self Movement after Liberation, they did receive appreciation and encouragement from Premier Zhou Enlai. But this certainly does not mean that the Communist Party told the Chinese Church to launch such a movement.
7. We have also set up the *China Christian Council* for the pastoral needs of the Chinese churches. This is the Church affairs organization of Chinese Christians.

In sum, organizations in China are properly constituted and the differences and relationships among them should be clearly noted. Our Chinese churches are independent not only of foreign churches, but also of the NPC, the CPPCC, the Government and the Party. It is wrong for people outside China to say that the Three-Self Movement is an "official church". China has no "official church". The Chinese Church is run by Chinese Christians ourselves. It is understandable why those who adopt a hostile political attitude towards New China would call the Chinese church which generally supports New China an "official church". We regard the term "official church" to be a political expression with which to attack New China. Among the many churches of the world, ours is not one which can be labelled an "official church".

4. Religion and Imperialism

Religion has been exploited by colonialists and imperialists in their aggression against China. We have not denied the scientific character of this assertion. Many of our policy decisions today are related to this fact. This is not any more a question which requires

much explanation inside China. Even overseas, more and more people are today recognizing this fact.

5. Our Three-Self Principle

We are resolved to uphold the reasonableness and justice of Three-Self for the Chinese church. On the basis of past history it is necessary for the Chinese Church to follow the Three-Self road. Today, for the Chinese Church to bear witness to the gospel among the Chinese people, self-government, self-support and self-propagation are also necessary. We cannot return to the old situation representing a "foreign religion". Following the ten-year catastrophe, we are returning to our guiding principle of the fifties, not that of the forties. It is wrong for those people outside China who long for a return to the past to think that we are returning to the forties. A return to the forties would mean discarding Three-Self, again making Christianity a "foreign religion". In returning to the guiding principle of the fifties, we wish to continue to uphold self-government, self-support and self-propagation, and to make the Church one which is well-governed, well-supported and well-propagating too.

6. The Unity of the Chinese Church

The present unity of the Chinese Christians is unprecedented. When I first came to Nanking in the early fifties, there were still many denominations separated by deep divisions. The members of one denomination in particular would not even pray with the rest of us. Now the brothers and sisters of this group are not only willing to pray with us, but even to share the sacraments together. The unity which has emerged in the Chinese Church is closer than ever before. We are no longer separated by denominational walls. We do experience "how good and beautiful it is for brothers and sisters to dwell in harmony".

The number of churches which have been reopened is still quite small, perhaps not more than 80 at present in the entire country. But Christians have not stopped gathering together, as many meet in their homes. It is a tradition in the Chinese Church for Christians to gather in homes to pray and read the Bible. Even in the past when there were many churches, people liked to worship in their homes in addition to going to church. When I was little, my mother used to ask friends, relatives and neighbours over to our home once a week for a worship service. There was an increase in such gatherings in homes during the "Cultural Revolution" period. We found there were 25 home worship

gatherings in Nanking alone. Although many Christians now go to the churches which have recently been reopened, there are in Nanking, for instance, still 5 such home worship gatherings. Some older people find that it is inconvenient to go to services in churches because of the distance they would have to travel. Others prefer the intimacy of the home worship gatherings, while still others attend both types of worship. Frequently, people record a church service to take back to listen to in their home worship gathering.

There are people outside China who are not thankful to God that the Chinese Church is more united now than ever before, but instead try to split the Chinese Church by dividing it into a "Three-Self Church" and a "House Church". Why should the simple question of where one worships be turned into a contradiction between the home and Three-Self? Does the fact that first-century Christians all worshipped in their homes mean that they would oppose the three-self principle and rely on support from foreign quarters? Today in China, no matter where Christians gather for worship, the vast majority are patriotic and seek to defend and implement self-government, self-support and self-propagation. When there were 25 home worship gatherings in Nanking and the local committee of the Three-Self Movement called a meeting, those who attended the home worship gatherings all came.

We are pleased to tell you that now, after these ten catastrophic years of the "Cultural Revolution", the Chinese Church is even more united. Christians saw with their own eyes that many leaders of the Three-Self Movement were harassed by the "Gang of Four" because of the Church, and yet they did not complain or advertise it. It was also these leaders who did what they could to preserve Bibles. Such actions could not but inspire people and deepen our unity in Christ. China being a big country with many Christians, it will always be possible to find a few people who disapprove of or oppose Three-Self. But today, the centre of opposition to Three-Self is not within China, but overseas.

We Chinese Christians have chosen the road of post-denominational unity, not because we are better than anyone else, but because we live in our particular historical situation. In retrospect, we can only say that this has been a result of the leading of the Holy Spirit, who has allowed us to bathe in the ocean of God's grace.

7. The Work we have before us

The Chinese Church does not only want to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, but well-governed, well-supported and well-propagating. We must make up for lost time and do our pastoral work well. Each day we receive many letters asking us to send pastoral workers, and requesting Bibles, hymnals, devotional materials and theological literature. These are the calls of Macedonia which we must give heed to. Chinese Church workers have a great deal of work ahead. Our churches must have good services of worship; there must be better spiritual nurture for lay people; we must witness faithfully to the people around us; and we must be deeply concerned for the welfare of the Chinese people. To do all this we have set up the China Christian Council. It is not a Church, but an ecclesial organization for the service of Christians. We cannot proceed at a faster pace than one permitted by the present capacity of the Chinese Church. There are some questions, the sacraments and orders, for example, over which we are unable to arrive at any unanimity of opinion all at once. But there are many other matters which do await our common initiative. We have begun to print Bibles and have republished the *Tian Feng* periodical. The seminary has published teaching materials for nation-wide theological education by extension, and it is also in the process of recruiting students. A newly edited hymnal has also come out for temporary use. Books for the training of lay people are now being edited. So the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement have both a great deal that they would like to do.

8. Evangelistic Work in China is the Responsibility of the Chinese Church

We do not approve of those people overseas who try to mould public opinion into thinking that they should send missionaries back to China. No matter how large the population of China is and how small our Church is, the responsibility for spreading the gospel and building up the Church in China is the mission of Chinese Christians. We will not invite missionaries to China from overseas. We wish to declare that no group or individual overseas should engage in evangelistic activity in China without the expressed consent of Chinese Church authorities who retain responsibility and jurisdiction in this area.

There was recently the case of an American passing out religious tracts on the streets of Guangzhou who drew the attention and intervention of the police. Then he got angry and said that China had no

religious freedom or freedom for missionary work, and he threatened to telegraph President-elect Reagan requesting that America cut off its "financial aid" to China. We believe this person was in the wrong. If a large number of foreigners all acted in a similar fashion, then what would become of the image of Christianity in China? Would it not once again be regarded as a "foreign religion"? Would that not wipe away Chinese Christians' 30-year efforts in promoting Three-Self? Therefore, we feel sensitive over the question of missionary work in China.

All missionary and church activities, including radio broadcasts beamed at China, which are carried out willfully and unmindful of Chinese Church authorities are expressions of disrespect and unfriendliness. It is not we who are closing the door of the Gospel in China. We are but learning the lessons of history. We uphold self-government, self-support and self-propagation as the road of an independent and self-administered Church in order to guarantee that the door of the Gospel may be open and remain open in China. It would simply be self-destructive for the Chinese Church to return to a colonial status, and that in the long run is to shut the door of the gospel. And for this American to speak of mutually beneficial trade as "financial aid" is just arrogance and lack of education.

9. Overseas Church Groups' Activities with Non-Christian Chinese Enterprises

Some Church-related groups overseas are now in the process of negotiating with Chinese schools, hospitals, factories, communes and other enterprises for co-operative investment and exchange programs. We would not have any opinion if these groups were not Church-affiliated, providing that they were not injurious to our national sovereignty. But we are concerned when Church-related groups are so involved. For example, can those church groups which are engaged in activity of a technical nature in China honestly say that they have no goal of bearing witness or doing mission work? Insofar as it is in the nature of a church to be involved in things, how can their people deny having that goal, even if it is not explicitly stated in the contract? This has serious implications for a whole series of questions. One is a question of Christian ethics on the relationship between means and ends. Another is the harm which could be done to the Three-Self principle of the Chinese Church if our jurisdiction is violated. There are priests, ministers and nuns who came to China to teach English who have said that English teaching is their method and means but

that their real purpose is evangelism. Is it honest for them to conceal their identity? Is it right that they should not consult the Chinese Church and, in some cases, should have even attacked us?

We cannot rely on foreigners for the preaching of the gospel and the building up of the Church among the 900 million Chinese people. Let the Church take root today in Chinese soil, so that tomorrow it may blossom and bear fruit. Foreign churches by doing missionary work in China in unauthorized ways, will be going against the direction chosen by Chinese Christians 30 years ago and will have a damaging effect on Three-Self. We are deeply concerned and must study the matter more carefully.

10. No Return to Denominationalism

We feel that the Chinese Church can only go forward and not backward. The denominational consciousness of Chinese Christians has been quite weak. I myself am an Anglican, and there are many Christians and church workers in China who are also Anglican. But I don't know of any who wants to restore the Anglican Church.

There are a small number of people overseas who have worked to restore their particular denominations in China, but they have not found popular support among Chinese Christians. We would like them to stop working to that end.

When former missionaries come to China, it is natural for them to seek out people they have known who belonged to their particular denominations. This is something we can understand. But let them not go so far as to attempt to revive denominational feelings and loyalties, thus inviting misunderstanding and unpleasantness.

11. International Relationships

We are a small Church with many responsibilities within China. We think our major efforts must be devoted to our domestic work. We wish to immerse ourselves in our work so as to push this experiment of ours forward. Then, perhaps sometime in the future, we will be able to speak of some contribution to the international Christian community. But for now, our international commitments must be limited, meaning that we must differentiate and be selective.

We want to have contacts and exchange for the purpose of mutual learning with church groups and individuals overseas who have a friendly attitude towards New China and who respect the

Three-Self principle of the Chinese Christians. But we will adopt a different attitude to those individuals and groups who are unfriendly towards New China and oppose our Three-Self principle. Today we are making observations which will enable us to accurately differentiate one from the other. We are by no means suggesting that we regard only those who approve of everything that New China does as friendly. What we are looking at is their basic attitude in recent years. People can change, and we will not dwell on the past or settle old scores. We like our friends to grow more and more numerous.

12. Our Participation in International Organizations and Conferences

Here we must differentiate too and, because of our limited resources, be selective. There are a number of organizations and conferences which have taken a friendly attitude towards us in which we have not been able to participate. We have also not been able to invite many friendly church groups from overseas for visits in China. We ask for our overseas friends' understanding in these matters.

13. Material or Financial Contributions from Abroad

Ours is a very small church with limited financial resources, but we are able to support ourselves. The strength of our position lies in the fact that we will not do anything beyond our ability and thus be forced to become parasitic. But because our Chinese Church is now already self-supporting and independent, there is probably no longer the need to maintain a simple "closed-door policy" on the question of receiving contributions. We are pondering over the wisdom of accepting certain contributions from friendly church groups and persons overseas, with no strings attached and with due respect for the independent stance of our Church, simply as an expression of the universality of our Christian fellowship. This may stop the slander of our enemies and dispel the misunderstanding of our friends too.

Contributions would have to be from groups and individuals which are friendly towards New China and our Church, and there could be no strings attached. I think we can open the door a little to allow people to make contributions to our local churches. But larger amounts should generally be handled by the China Christian Council, perhaps for its pastoral work fund, because we could not allow foreign contributions to create or restore disparities between rich and poor churches. This tentative idea will be discussed by the leaders of

the Three-Self Committee and the China Christian Council. If it is put into effect, it would certainly be carried out with extreme care, and we hope our friends overseas will be able to understand.

There are people overseas who presumptuously speak of financial contributions in the name of saving the Chinese Church, playing up their own role by going so far as to solicit contributions for this purpose. We want to declare that we have not and will not entrust anyone overseas to solicit contributions for the Chinese Church. We basically believe that our Church should be content with what it has, enjoying its poverty and thriftiness. It should live within its means by relying primarily upon contributions from Chinese Christians. We are opposed to making a big thing out of the financial problems of the Church, which would obscure its true character and witness.

14. Differentiation Among China Programs in Overseas Churches

There are many "China programs" in churches overseas which seem to take quite different attitudes towards China. We are observing and studying these programs so that we may differentiate among them. We are very grateful for the good work which some of them are doing. But there are also others which in name are engaged in research, in the promotion of prayer for China and in the work of Christian fellowship, but in actuality are collecting intelligence, spreading hate-China propaganda, and seeking to infiltrate China and violate our Church's jurisdiction. This tells us that we must not only listen to what they say, but also watch their actions. We must be careful observers and draw the necessary line of demarcation.

We will not disappoint those who are friendly towards us, and we will treat them in a friendly manner. Together with them in true Christian fellowship, we can more deeply enter into Christ's abundance and grace.

translated by Philip L. Wicker

Bishop Ting is chairperson of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and President of the China Christian Council. The fourteen points discussed here were originally presented in a conversation with Rev Andrew Chiu and Rev Arthur Wu of Hongkong on December 23, 1980. This English translation is authorized by Bishop Ting for Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre, Hong Kong, for publication in its journal, *Ching Feng*, Vol XXIV, No 1 1981. For re-publication please acknowledge the source.

Comments in the Secular Press

1. Chinese Christians Visit Hong Kong*

The presence in Hong Kong of Bishop K H Ting, President of the China Christian Council, is a historic occasion, marking the first official visit of a Christian delegation since the founding of the People's Republic 32 years ago. As an opportunity for Protestant leaders in Hong Kong to meet and exchange views with their mainland counterparts, it is particularly welcome.

It is valuable also for the insight it will give local churchmen on how the Chinese church has survived, adapted, and developed in spite of serious obstacles and pressures. There have been radical changes. Denominations no longer exist, although Catholics still maintain a separate existence. Foreign missionaries no longer operate in China. Nor are Bibles and Christian literature printed overseas permitted to enter. Overseas missionary organisations are not allowed to send funds to their former associates in China; and even overseas religious broadcasts are frowned on.

In short the church in China is very much thrown on its own resources and it will probably continue to operate this way indefinitely, however much this may be regretted by some branches of the church overseas. But if the Chinese church accepts this as the price of survival and the authorities place no further restrictions on Christian worship and the propagation of Christian teaching, that will be a major step forward, and one that must be endorsed.

In saying this we do not wish to repudiate or denigrate the work of the church or the foreign missionaries in the past; for while they may be maligned by some today for their way of life or for their divi-

* *South China Morning Post*, editorial comment, 25 March 1981.

sive beliefs, there is no doubt that they did much to nurture the seeds of Christianity first taken to China by the Nestorians in the seventh century.

And the seeds were so well and firmly planted that despite many years of active persecution under the Maoists, the church survived, albeit in a token form and one which was often criticised as being a tool of the government. Indeed it is a credit to the Chinese church that it is as strong as it is today.

Overseas Christians welcome the fact that it has set about printing its own Bibles and other literature, that it has succeeded in having about 80 churches reopened and that the "house church" exists in many parts of the country where churches have remained closed. Perhaps its greatest achievement is that it has been able to bury denominational differences and to bring Christians together if not under one roof, then two.

There may even come a time when reunification of Protestants and Catholics may be achieved, but even if this is a distant prospect, it is pleasing to know that Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and others worship, pray, and plan their future together. And if the church in Hong Kong is in any way able to help, if only by its understanding and prayers, this will be valued by its Chinese counterparts.

Bishop Ting, who recently stated the views of the China Christian Council and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee (of which he is also chairman), made it plain that he does not want foreign missionaries to intrude in any way and this feeling must be respected. He and his fellow Christians know the situation in China better than anyone else. He also said: "We basically believe that our church should be content with what it has, enjoying its poverty and thriftiness."

And again this wish must be respected. There are many ways in which co-operation will still be possible, and Hong Kong churchmen can learn much from China's experience and the role of Christians in a communist society. For what it has lost in numbers it has probably gained in spirituality, faith, belief and dedication. By contrast, the growth of a liberal society in the western world has in many cases led to the loss of both.

2. Gospel Truth About Religion in China . . .*

Chinese authorities have charged in recent months that Hong Kong-linked smuggling rackets have sold watches, television sets and tape recorders in the black markets of Chinese cities.

But what about those who try to smuggle a foreign religious ideology into China?

A dispute has arisen over what one observer has called "a religious tug-of-war for Chinese souls."

An American missionary claimed last November that he was harassed by Chinese security police while trying to hand out religious pamphlets to young people in Canton.

More recently, the same missionary—the Rev Eddie Karnes—has called on President Ronald Reagan to protest against what Mr Karnes described as the confiscation of Bibles from American Christians by Chinese officials.

What Mr Karnes does not seem to realise is that the image of the Western missionary in China has been equated with Western politics since the first Christian missionaries moved into the country in the 16th century.

The missionaries opened schools, hospitals and churches and converted millions of Chinese, but were often seen as advertisements for Western economic and social practices.

"While our Western image of Jesus is as the Son of God, the Chinese think of Jesus in terms of gunboat diplomacy," said Dr Eugene Stockwell, general secretary of the US National Council of the Churches of Christ.

The Rev Jim Taylor, whose great-grandfather founded the Christian Chinese Inland Mission in 1954, put it this way:

"It is unfortunate that Christianity came to China with colonialism. To send Western missionaries into China again would only remind the Chinese of colonial days. This time the Chinese must find their own expression of Christianity."

We are not suggesting that modern-day evangelists interested in China are not bona-fide missionaries.

* *Hong Kong Standard*, editorial comment.

We believe, however, that some of them are going about it the wrong way.

China has just opened itself up to foreigners, and there are some rules about the way that visitors have to behave. Westerners who want to go to China must obey those rules.

Chinese officials assigned to Western countries do not abuse the hospitality of those countries by trying to convert the local citizens to communism.

As China steps up its long march away from Maoism, Beijing has lifted some of the tight restrictions imposed on religious expression in the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s.

And there has been a broad revival of religion among Buddhists, Muslims and Taoists as well as Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Bishop Ting Kwang-hsun, president of the China Christian Council, revealed in Hong Kong over the weekend that Christians in China are printing their own copies of the Bible instead of relying on imported ones as in the past. Last year alone the council printed more than 100,000 copies.

“Christianity was imported from abroad as part of foreign colonialism,” Bishop Ting has said. “That accounts for the small number of Christians. The Christian church will not die in China because we have religious freedom. But it will not grow because of its history.”

With half the world closed to them, and many in Africa and Latin America suspicious of the Christian message, missionaries have learnt to temper their desire to spread the Gospel.

“The hope in certain missionary circles, however, is that if the Chinese are willing to let in Coca-Cola and Pierre Cardin, then perhaps China will also open the door to Western missionaries.

But an American Catholic sinologist seemed to reflect the feeling of most responsible church leaders some years ago when he observed:

“There will never be a foreign-dominated church in China again, and this is good.”

3. China's First Christian Delegation Visits Hong Kong*

An 8-member delegation of Christian leaders headed by Rt Rev K H Ding arrived in Hong Kong from China on March 22. This was the first official visit to Hong Kong in the 32 years since Liberation.

In a speech at the Hungghum railway station, the Rt Rev K H Ding, president of the newly formed China Christian Council, said that after the smash of the Gang of Four, the policy of enjoying freedom of religion in China has been put into practice. Many religious associations are now being formed again.

The Chinese delegation was welcomed by Bishop of Hong Kong, Rt Rev Gilbert Baker, HK Christian Council's chairman, Father Peter Wong and executive secretary-general (*sic*), Raymond Fung and Bishop Yap Kim Hao, general-secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia.

At an interview with our reporter, Rt Rev K H Ding, who is also chairman of the Chinese National Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, said, 'Last year we printed over 100,000 copies of the Bible by using our own money, paper and printing facilities without foreign subsidy. It was the first time in Chinese history.'

K H Ding revealed that in the past 30 years Christianity in China has been developing and in some aspects has developed its own character. Chinese Christians identify themselves with the people. They emphasize self-government, self-support and self-propagation, so they set up the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee.

Since the setting up of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, China Christian associations have broken away from sectarianism introduced by foreign missionaries. Christian associations in various provinces are now organized under the China Christian Council without being separated into different branches.

K H Ding said that Christians in the mainland are now more active in politics. Some Christian leaders have become representatives or members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. They give comments on revising the Constitution and on policies of economics and politics.

* *Ta Kung Pao*, 26 March 1981.

He pointed out that from September 1979 to December 1980, over 100 churches were reopened and more will be reopened. The number of Christians has increased compared with that of early years after Liberation. There are about one million Christians. Most of them concentrate in coastal areas such as Shanghai, Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang while there are much fewer Christians in the Northeast, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Ningxia, Qinghai and Tibet.

Speaking on the development of Christianity in China, K H Ding said that Chinese Christians will insist on the principle of "three-self". They are also willing, however, to contact and make friends with those foreign Christians associations which respect the principle of 'three-self' and are friends of the new China.

Meanwhile, the four-day (March 23-26) consultation of Asian churches has featured presentations by the Chinese delegation. Church leaders from Singapore, Hong Kong, Pakistan, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Malaysia have come to Hong Kong for the occasion. The consultation is convened by Bishop Yap Kim Hao.

During its two-week visit, the Chinese delegation will spend time in a series of meetings and visits with churches in Hong Kong, including conversation with the Hong Kong Christian Council, a discussion with church leaders and participation in a thanksgiving service. The Chinese delegates will also be preaching in local churches and visiting Christian institutions such as the Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre, Chung Chi College and the alumni gathering of three theological seminaries.

Other members of the delegation from China are Mr Han Wen-zao, Rev Hung Chan-pui (Guangzhou), Mr Lo Kuan-chung (Shanghai), Mr Shen De-rong, Miss Tsao Seng-chieh, Rev Matthew Tong (Guangzhou), and Rev Peter Tsai (Hangzhou).

The Chinese delegation is scheduled to leave on April 2.

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